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ABSTRACT

Educational policies and plans for Italy's entire education system are evaluated in this report. Part One contains "The Examiners' Report;" Part Two, the "Record of the Review Meeting;" and Part Three, a "Summary of the Background Report" (prepared by the Italian authorities). Some results of the evaluation include the following. Italy must cope with the consequences of higher enrollments in post-school education and with major structural reforms at all educational levels. While the establishment of a common school at the lower secondary level and the 1979 curricular reforms were well conceived, problems of implementation remain. Successful experimental programs have not been replicated. Middle school students need more guidance. There is discontinuity in the curriculum of the upper secondary school. The general education curriculum is too rigid. Elementary and secondary teachers should not be trained separately; universities should be made responsible for all teacher education. Possible remedies to drawbacks of Italy's open access to higher education include the introduction of a two-year diploma and the creation of short-cycle vocational courses. (RM)

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# EDUCATIONAL REFORMS IN ITALY

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REVIEWS OF
NATIONAL POLICIES
FOR EDUCATION

# EDUCATIONAL REFORMS IN ITALY

ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

3

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LES RÉFORMES DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT EN ITALIE

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This is the third OECD review of educational policy in Italy. The first review took place in 1960 in connection with the Mediterranean Regional Project. The second review took place in 1967, the Examiners' report being published in 1969 : (OECD, *Reviews of National Policies for Education : Italy*, Paris). The dominant theme was the adjustment of the education system to economic and social needs, with special regard to the technical problems resulting from changes in this system and recent economic and social trends in Italy.

Unlike the two previous ones the present review encompasses policies and plans for the entire education system which, the Examiners record, has undergone considerable change since 1969, not least under the impact of demographic and economic forces. In earlier decades the emphasis was on providing places and teachers for rapidly expanding numbers of pupils and on ensuring that a satisfactory basic education was available for all. Gradually, as circumstances have permitted, the emphasis has shifted towards more selective and qualitative developments aimed at diversifying the range of upper secondary and post-secondary options and meeting the increasingly specialised needs of professional and trained personnel in the expanding industrial and service sectors.

The Examiners find that Italy is obliged to cope with the consequences not only of higher enrolments in post-school education but of major structural reforms at all educational levels. They identify the main problems that have arisen and discuss the appropriateness of the measures being adopted to deal with them.

At the primary school level, the Examiners are impressed by the dedication of the teachers and the enthusiasm of the children. They point out, however, that the passage to the middle (lower secondary) school appears to cause some difficulties, not least because the two levels of schooling are wedded to different traditions and served by staff with different academic and professional experience.

The Examiners believe that the establishment of a common school at the lower secondary level (the middle school) and the curricular reforms of 1979 were well conceived. However, problems of implementation remain. Main pilot experimental programmes in individual schools have proved successful but too few attempts have been made to replicate them. Pupils appear to need more guidance than they are at present receiving both throughout the middle school years and at the time when they must choose a career path after school. There is discontinuity with the curriculum of the upper secondary cycle.

The Examiners analyse the range of educational and training opportunities after compulsory school. Noting the division of responsibilities between the Ministers of Education and Labour, they speculate whether there is adequate collaboration between the two. In their opinion the general education curriculum in the *licei* remains too rigid, concentrates too much on the classics and neglects the teaching of modern languages.

The Examiners point out that the Italian authorities, through a desire to improve the quality of the teaching force, are anxious to bring to an end the dual system of training primary and secondary teachers in quite separate institutions by making the universities responsible for all initial training. The Examiners caution that this solution to the problem will only succeed if the universities are able to appoint suitably qualified staff and to acquire additional resources. The existing facilities for in-service training are generally agreed to be

inadequate. The Examiners believe that the recent creation of regional centres to undertake responsibility for such training as well as relevant research (IRRSAE) is to be applauded but that, again, success will depend on whether the Centres are able to recruit high-quality staff and command sufficient resources.

The Examiners admire the determination of the Italian authorities to maintain open access to higher education while pointing to the drawbacks, notably excessive enrolments and a high drop-out rate, that are as familiar to them as to external observers. Among possible remedies they recommend closer liaison between universities and upper secondary schools, the introduction of a two-year diploma, the institution of a student support system, and the creation of short-cycle vocational courses.

On policy-making, control and management, the Examiners concur with the intention of the central authorities to devolve as much power as possible to the regional level. They believe, however, that this devolution calls for the setting up of an effective and flexible system of decision-making and policy implementation. The Ministry of Education will need to strengthen its capacity for evaluating the overall performance of the education system and for conducting a research and development strategy. The need for a more clearly defined and coherent system for analysing information, monitoring change and formulating new educational policies is all the greater given the background of falling rolls in the schools and economic constraints.

The Examiners' report incorporates in Part Two a full account of the customary review meeting, at which an Italian delegation replied comprehensively and candidly to the major issues raised by the Examiners and members of the OECD Education Committee. The report also contains in Part Three a summary of the background report prepared by the Italian authorities.

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*Part One*

# THE EXAMINERS' REPORT

# I

# THE ITALIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM IN PERSPECTIVE

Since the previous OECD report in 1969 the Italian education system has experienced considerable change and development, and has been affected by demographic and economic factors. Before turning to discuss some of the important issues confronting Italian education today it may be helpful to sketch first the perspective in which that system has evolved and now operates.

## Historical development

Italy is a country of variety and contrasts. This is visible in its range of geographical and climatic features. It is also present in the culture and traditions of the people. Until recently this diversity also extended to language and political organisation in that many regional dialects flourished until the emergence of one common language and the many smaller states were unified to form the modern Italian state a century ago. In that century of its distinctive existence, Italy has experienced many dramatic changes, but perhaps none more so than the rapid transformation of the past three decades.

A comparative latecomer among the European countries in the process of industrialisation, Italy was for long characterised as having a predominantly agriculturally-based economy. This pattern began to change in the early decades of the century but there was a remarkable acceleration in the pace of change in the post-war period. Whereas half of all employment was in agriculture at the end of the war, that proportion is now less than 15 per cent. This dramatic transformation meant that more than 6 million people left the land for employment in industry or services.

Thanks to this rapid post-war development the Italian economy today ranks among the largest and most advanced of the world. This overall attainment conceals however the substantial variations which still exist within the country, usually illustrated by the disparity between North and South. The South, or *Mezzogiorno*, still has a much greater proportion of workers in agriculture (35 per cent in 1980) than the North (9 per cent), and while it accounts for 35 per cent of the population its share of GDP is only about 24 per cent. These regional imbalances have been recognised and have been the subject of major campaigns aimed at reducing them, which have been attended with considerable success in that the differences today are far less pronounced than those of earlier decades.

Despite the unifying effects of language, and more evenly balanced development, there is still a considerable degree of regional diversity in Italy. This is reflected in the administrative

organisation of the country where some regions possess considerable degrees of autonomy in the formulation or application of laws, while even for the regions as a whole there has been a tendency to devolve greater powers in the administration of various services during the past decade. These regional variations need not be pursued here other than to note that they affect the operation of some functions of the education system.

Education itself has been affected by the same rapid development as the society as a whole. In earlier decades the emphasis was on providing places and teachers for the rapidly expanding numbers of pupils and of ensuring that a satisfactory basic education was accessible to all. Gradually, as circumstances have permitted, the emphasis has shifted towards more selective and qualitative developments aimed at opening up the range of second-level and third-level educational options and also for meeting the more specialised needs of professional and trained personnel in the expanding industrial and services sectors.

**Economic and financial outlook**

From the 1950s up to the first oil crisis in 1973, Italy enjoyed a period of rapid economic development, with only short-term recessionary interruptions. Since then, in common with other oil-importing countries, Italy has experienced economic difficulties that were made more acute by the second oil crisis in 1979. The consequences have been the familiar ones; a severe slow-down, and at times a standstill, in economic growth, a consequential rise in unemployment, an increase in inflationary pressures, and a deterioration in the government's budgetary situation. Italy has suffered more severely than many other countries from these ill-effects, and the expectation is that it will take several years to recover from them. One likely consequence is that since tax levels are already high, there will be severe restraint on the growth of public spending in order to reduce the deficit in government budgets to reasonable levels. Any assessment of likely future trends in any one area of spending must take account of this general budgetary context, and this must apply with even greater force to areas such as education which account for a large share of total spending. In recent years education has accounted for about 12 per cent of total government expenditure and has been equivalent to about 7 per cent of GNP.

**Structure of the education system**

Compulsory schooling in Italy lasts for 8 years from the age of 6 to 14. However, in practice a growing number of children start their formal schooling before this through attendance at nursery schools *(scuola materna)*. Nursery schools cater for children in the 3 to 5 age groups. The 1981 enrolment figure of 1.84 million accounts for about 78 per cent of the children of this age group (the proportion of three-year-olds being less than, and that of five-year-olds being more than, this average enrolment figure). The proportion of children enrolling has shown a steady upward trend. Comparative figures for 1975 and 1978 were 62 per cent and 70 per cent respectively, but the absolute level of enrolments has now peaked because of the declining number of births.

The period of compulsory education is divided into two cycles – *a 5-year primary cycle* and *a 3-year lower secondary cycle*. The enrolment rate at primary school has been effectively 100 per cent for many years. However, the downward trend in births has meant that total pupil numbers have been falling. The 1981 total of 4.43 million represents a drop of almost a half-million from the 1975 figure of 4.92 million.

The second phase of compulsory schooling is given in the lower secondary schools (*scuola media* – middle school) which offer a three-year broadly based curriculum to all pupils. Again participation rates are of the order of 100 per cent, though in this case the figure is a more recent accomplishment, and a tendency for small numbers to drop out before 14 in some areas has also been noted. The number of pupils had been rising steadily until recently, the figure of 2.9 million in 1980 contrasting with figures of 2.62 million in 1975 and 2.06 million in 1970. However, the fall in births is now affecting the trend and the 1981 enrolment recorded a fall of 40 000 on the previous year's level.

At age 14 pupils may leave school with or without their school certificate, and take up work or an apprenticeship, but the majority proceed to upper secondary schools. In contrast to the uniform structure of the compulsory cycle there is considerable variety in the range of these schools. The traditional pre-university programme is represented by the classical and scientific *licei*. Recent decades have seen the rapid growth in importance of the Technical and Professional Institutes. These provide a wide range and combination of subjects, so that as many as 200 different courses of study have been identified, all of them offering the possibility of access to university. The basic course in these *licei* and institutes is of five years' duration, usually divided into a two-year and three-year module, with the latter three years giving the possibility of more specialised courses of study. At the completion of these five years, the school leaving examination known as the *maturità* is taken, possession of which qualifies the holder for admission to any university faculty.

One further significant component in the structure of post-compulsory education is represented by the training colleges for primary school teachers, the *Istituti magistrali*. These offer a four-year programme. Their graduates are not directly qualified for entry to university (with the exception of the *magistero*), their qualifications being recognised for both nursery school and primary school teaching.

The distribution of students among these various types of upper secondary schools in 1981 was as follows:

**Distribution of students by type of school (1981)**

| School type | % of total students |
|---|---|
| *Liceo classico* | 8.5 |
| *Liceo scientifico* | 16.3 |
| Professional institutes | 18.5 |
| Technical institutes | 44.6 |
| Teacher training schools | 9.8 |
| Other (art schools) | 2.3 |
| Total | 100.0 |

There has been a substantial growth in the total enrolment of these upper secondary schools from 1.57 million in 1970 to 2.41 million in 1981. The estimated proportion of the relevant age groups enrolled in 1981 was as shown in the table on next page.

While many pupils leave the education system at various stages of the secondary school cycle, a considerable proportion of those who obtain the *maturità* (school leaving certificate) continue their studies at *university*, and may freely enter the faculty of their choice. First year entrants to universities in 1980-81 amounted to 238 000, equal to 72 per cent of the numbers

**Estimated proportion of age group attending upper secondary school (1981)**

| Age group | % attending school |
|---|---|
| 14-15 | 76 |
| 15-16 | 58 |
| 16-17 | 51 |
| 17-18 | 43 |
| 18-19 | 33 |

obtaining the *maturità* in that year (in 1968-69 the figures were 142 000, equal to 76.5 per cent). Total student numbers have risen substantially since the mid-1960s. The 1964-65 total was 360 000, in 1969-70 this figure had risen to 617 000, by 1974-75 the total had reached 887 000, and in 1980-81 it had passed the million, at 1 048 000. The basic course offered by the universities leads to the degree of *laurea*, and is typically of 4 or 5 years' duration. There are very few diploma or other short-cycle courses available. The number of graduates is small relative to the total student body. In 1978-79 graduates totalled 77 000, equal to about 7.5 per cent of a total student body of about 1 million. Similar proportions hold for earlier years – the 1974-75 graduate figure of 66 000 being equal to about 7.5 per cent of that year's student body and the 1969-70 graduate figure of 47 000 being again about 7.5 per cent of that year's enrolment of students. This small graduate output is largely a reflection of two factors:

*a)* the number of students who drop out without graduating and
*b)* the large number who take extra years to complete their studies (one analysis indicates that only about 10 per cent of entrants pass through the university and complete their studies in the normal time period).

Finally, it may be noted that the numbers attending university represent a significant proportion of the age groups in question, the 1980-81 student total being equal to about 19 per cent of the total numbers in the 19 to 24 age group.

In addition to the formal educational structure as outlined above, there is also a large-scale *system of vocational training* in Italy. This is operated by the various regional authorities, and not, as with formal education, by the Ministry of Education. These training courses can range up to a maximum of 2 years in duration and are available to school leavers from the age of 14 years upwards. They are organised by the regional authorities on the basis of the manpower needs and skill requirements of the industries in their area.

To conclude this brief summary it may be useful to outline the educational qualification of school leavers. A recent study presents the following profile for 20-year-olds.

Summarising the same data in a slightly different form, we may say that:

13.8 per cent left school without any diploma
29.2 per cent obtained at least the *'brevet'* of *scuola media*
20.1 per cent obtained a short-cycle professional qualification
19.6 per cent obtained a *maturità*-level technical or professional diploma and
17.6 per cent obtained *maturità*-level diplomas of a general character

Thus, already by 1981 a substantial proportion of an age group were obtaining educational qualifications above those acquired from compulsory schooling. All the data on enrolments point to further increases in this level of qualification in the years ahead.

**Educational profile of 20-year-olds**

| Level of education | Number (thousands) | % of total |
|---|---|---|
| Completed *liceo* | 97.6 | 10.7 |
| Completed technical institute | 152.4 | 16.9 |
| Completed professional institute | | |
| with *maturità* | 24.3 | 2.7 |
| with certificate | 76.1 | 8.4 |
| Completed other type of institute | 62.5 | 6.9 |
| Completed a course of vocational training | 106.5 | 11.7 |
| Followed a course at upper secondary school for 1 or 2 years | 160.7 | 17.7 |
| Obtained certificate from lower secondary school (*scuola media*) | 103.7 | 11.5 |
| Followed the course at lower secondary | 94.5 | 10.4 |
| Followed the course at primary school | 30.9 | 3.4 |
| Total | 904.2 | 100.0 |

## Demographic trends

Reference has already been made to the way in which falling birth rates have been affecting school enrolments. This trend will continue to operate during the 1980s in some cases with quite pronounced effects. Twenty years ago the number of births was about 1 million annually, by 1972 the figure was down to 880 000, in 1976 it was 780 000 and by 1981 it had dropped to 625 000. The expectation is that the figure will now stabilize or even show a modest upward movement towards the 700 000 level, but it is not expected to pass this figure in the years ahead.

These movements in the number of births have important implications for school enrolments. The projections for the period up to 1990 based on these demographic trends are as follows:

**Estimated pupil enrolments**

| School type | 1980-81 | 1985-86 | 1990-91 | % change 1990 on 1980 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pre-school | 1 840 000 | 1 588 000 | 1 705 000 | – 7.5 |
| Primary | 4 435 000 | 3 789 000 | 3 152 000 | –29 |
| Lower secondary | 2 893 000 | 2 759 000 | 2 245 000 | –22 |
| Upper secondary | 2 415 000 | 2 289 000 | 2 161 000 | –10 |

These reductions in numbers hold out potential scope for various developments in the system, such as reductions in class size, extension of the number of years of compulsory schooling and development of more specialised courses for particular categories. Meanwhile, Italy is having to cope with the consequences at all educational levels, not only of high enrolments, but also of a number of major structural reforms. In the following chapters we hope to identify the main problems that have arisen and to discuss the appropriateness of the measures being taken to deal with them. Though considering the role of the primary school and the special problem of access to higher education, we shall be paying particular attention to developments in secondary education both at the lower and upper levels.

# II

## COMPULSORY SCHOOLING

The period of compulsory education in Italy is of eight years' duration, from the age of 6 to 14. It corresponds strictly to the eight levels comprising primary and middle (lower secondary) school. Normally, therefore, a child begins compulsory education with the first year of primary school and completes it at the end of the third year of lower secondary school. This strict correspondence perhaps explains why Italians so often speak of *la scuola dell'obbligo* – "the school of obligation". To foreign ears this expression may seem surprising, but it conveys a real, deeply-rooted sentiment. This schooling is compulsory for everyone, but it must also be open to all and adapt itself to each individual. It is schooling for collective advancement, unique and fundamentally unifying.

The expression also points up a contrast. Just as compulsory education is the same for all and a unifying element, so the education which follows it is widely diversified. After compulsory schooling, then, comes optional education. This is a particularly striking contrast which dominates the Italian educational scene and, as will be seen, raises problems at upper secondary school level. The immediately interesting point, however, is the strong sense of identity which compulsory schooling gains from its unique situation.

Even more important is the fact that the compulsory cycle comprises two types of schooling. There are marked differences between the five years of primary and the three years of lower secondary education. Throughout our visit the differences between the two cycles and the objective and subjective obstacles to overcoming them were stressed. This question will be dealt with later. It is sufficient to say here that compulsory schooling is not a continuous process: the schools in the two cycles are physically separate; staff have neither the same training nor the same teaching styles; curricula are planned on different principles. In other words, compulsory schooling is split into two distinct parts as traditionally in Europe – primary and lower secondary education.

It should be noted that in Italy this split seems to evoke no fundamental objections. Although ways of effecting a smooth transition from one stage to the other are sought and the present trend is to bring the two closer together, it is still accepted that the "middle school" should indeed provide secondary education. It is "middle" school not because it represents a further intermediary stage between primary and secondary education, but because it borrows from both – from primary education its undifferentiated enrolment and unifying role, and from secondary education the essential diversity of its teachers, the clearly specific nature of the subjects they teach and the university training they have received in order to do so. It can be seen that the middle school, while using the teaching methods of the secondary level, is

nevertheless primary in that it seeks to provide the same education for all. Italy is not alone in having to meet this challenge, but seeks to do so in its own way, with its own style, its own distribution of resources and its own constraints.

**Pre-compulsory schooling**

Before any further study of the compulsory school, we must consider first the problems encountered in the stage preceding it, that is, the pre-primary school. Since the last OECD review, the pre-primary school scene in Italy has undergone sweeping changes. In 1968 an Act was passed that introduced state intervention into a sector which had previously been the responsibility of local authorities and, above all, religious bodies. Since 1968, practically the whole of the increase in pre-primary school enrolment (+ 18 per cent between 1969 and 1980)[1] has been in state establishments. Moreover, the State now pays the staff of a number of schools which were previously private or local, so that it is now responsible for over 40 per cent of all pre-primary schools.

The increase in the numbers of children at pre-primary schools has occurred in spite of a decrease in the birth rate and it has been significant: 78 per cent of all 3-to 5-year-olds in 1981, as against 62 per cent in 1975 and 47 per cent in 1960. Almost 100 per cent of 5-year-olds attend school today.

So a substantial financial commitment by the State has taken over from the former, mainly Church, initiatives, which were running out of steam. Local authorities have put most of their efforts into providing buildings and facilities. All in all, pre-school attendance in Italy has reached a high level[2]. Another rather remarkable feature is that the differences between regions have narrowed a great deal. In 1960 the pre-primary school attendance rate in the South was 29 per cent lower than in the North; in 1981 the difference had narrowed to 10 per cent[3].

There are still difficulties, however. In 1974 it was decided that pre-primary schools should be administered independently by their own *direzione didattica*, but this was not followed up, for lack of resources. While the pre-primary school or group of schools does have its own collegial bodies (see below *School administration*), they are presided over by the head of the neighbouring primary school or group of schools, who exercises authority over and runs them. In Italy, as elsewhere, pre-primary schooling is determinedly claiming its own place alongside primary schooling. So it can readily be understood that the current situation is resented by pre-primary school staff, who feel that they are being made to play a subordinate role. Similarly, there is cause for concern about the slow development of the pre-primary school inspectorate which is being set up and should act as an important innovatory instrument – but so far there are only 22 inspectors for the whole of Italy – and not all of those, perhaps, have adequate experience of pre-primary education.

This state of affairs is not without its advantages. Sharing the same administration may help bridge the gaps between the two cycles that are so often deplored, lead to contacts between staff and ensure continuity of teaching methods. But not enough is being made of these potential advantages, largely because of the danger that they may further accentuate the impression that pre-primary schooling is being kept in a subordinate position. Do not partners need to be on an equal footing in order to co-operate successfully? We would simply point out that for the Italian education system it would be a pity not to take full advantage of the positive side of the present temporary situation. The thorough knowledge of pre-primary schooling which heads of primary schools are gaining from it should prove to be an invaluable asset in the future.

**Lowering the compulsory school age to 5**

It seemed to us that this last question was not unrelated to another issue now being roundly debated – whether compulsory school age should be lowered to 5. The problem is not, strictly speaking, one of *compulsion;* in fact, almost all five-year-olds already go to school, and making attendance compulsory would do no more than ratify the *status quo.* It might be thought that this was self-evident or superfluous. But the real argument is over the structures for accommodating this extra compulsory year. Should it still be spent at pre-primary school, or should five-year-olds now be integrated into the primary schools?

It would be convenient to be able to discuss this question in strictly pedagogical terms. But when educational policy is being discussed, it is impossible to dissociate the pedagogical side from the ambitions or influence of the institutions responsible. What would happen to pre-primary education if, for example, it were reduced to a two-year span, amputated of the stage of such passionate interest to educators where children are first introduced to more formal instruction? If the primary schools, whose staff are worried about falling enrolment, were to "annex" the extra year, would this be anything more than a way of saving jobs? On the other hand, should pre-primary school "empire building" be allowed to perpetuate a division where there should be none and disregard the movement which, breaking with the Piaget tradition, seeks to make the most of a child's intellectual potential as early as possible?

It is not for us, after a brief visit, to take sides in this debate given its many ramifications. The Italian authorities seem to be inclined towards leaving the extra year, if it does become compulsory, within the pre-primary education system. In view of the efforts that have been made over the past fifteen years to develop and enhance that sector, this would seem to be a logical choice. The real difficulty will be to uphold it and thus strengthen professionalism in pre-primary schooling, applying, in collaboration with the primary schools, methods which will bring out the abilities of all the children in this age group, which are indeed often underestimated. The complex question of the first steps in the cognitive learning process – so important but so hedged around with ideological prejudices – will not be solved simply by allocating a given age group to a given system. Neither will it be solved in the short term by raising the standard of pre-primary school teachers' initial training, however necessary this may be. Nevertheless, the Italian pre-primary schooling system, impelled by a new momentum and fortunate enough to have, for the moment, an institutional link with the primary schools, has a good chance of meeting this challenge successfully.

**School attendance**

From the way in which optional pre-primary schooling has developed, it is clear that the statutory obligation to send children to school is no longer felt to be a sanction. Italy is a modern society, which knows that education serves a real need. Marginally, however, the problem of keeping children at school until they are 14 still exists. Statistics show 100 per cent attendance up to the age of 11 but a few dropping out during the last three years. The drop-out rate has fallen sharply during recent years: in 1967 it stood at 9, 15 and 26 per cent respectively for children of 11, 12 and 13; the corresponding figures for 1976, the latest available to us, were a mere 1.5, 0.5 and 3.5 per cent. These figures seem to show that the problem has virtually disappeared but they disguise the fact that in some schools the drop-out rate for 13-year-olds remains significant. The children concerned have attended school regularly over a long period, but school for them has been a failure and in the end they reject it, sometimes violently. If the family will not or cannot do anything about the situation, nothing

can make the child stay on. The problem is a well-known one, and far from easy to deal with. Each child is a special case. The cost of expensive assistance and counselling measures is probably out of all proportion to that of the measures which could be taken within the schools themselves to make them better able to retain the children who drift away.

Sometimes, moreover, statistics do not tell the whole story. In Palermo we saw an urban situation where there is no way of keeping track of a whole section of the population that is fluid and marginalised by the usual statistical instruments. The problem then is to find out which children should be attending school before checking whether they actually are. This entails concerted action by a number of administrative services, and efforts are now being made to organise it.

No criticism is implied here. The concept of compulsory schooling dates from a period of social evolution when schools too often had to wrest children away from families who saw no point in education or, worse still, did not wish to lose their children's labour. With some exceptions, this is no longer the case today. In Italy this end has been achieved over the past ten years, even in the regions where the changes were slowest. A particularly striking feature here is the increase in regular lower secondary school attendance by 10 to 14-year-olds in the *Mezzogiorno*. This achievement naturally brings a further question in its wake: should the period of compulsory schooling be prolonged beyond the age of 14? This will be considered later.

## Primary School

### *Enrolments*

Over the past ten years there has been a fall in primary school attendance which, after almost reaching the 5 million mark in 1972, had dropped by 530 000 by 1980. This fall will continue; by 1990 enrolment is expected to be about 3 150 000, a reduction of over one-third in 18 years.

To begin with, administrative rigidities and pressure by teachers' unions led to the continuance of past recruiting policies for teachers. It was not until 1978 that a partial halt was called. Thus the teacher/pupil ratio has substantially improved from 1:21.4 in 1969 to 1:16.5 in 1978. It can only go on improving, since there seems to be no question of either dismissing surplus teachers (most of whom are established civil servants as a result of numerous statutory integration measures), or redeploying them in the secondary education sector, because they lack the necessary qualifications and because of union resistance. It is therefore expected that all things being equal, the ratio will have dropped to 1 teacher for every 12 pupils by 1990.

This may be said to be a comforting prospect. It is not certain that budgetary constraints may not force a downward adjustment, although as yet there is no indication of any such adjustment. But whatever happens, some of the benefit will remain. The primary schools' real problem seems to be how to use these relatively abundant resources to the pupils' best interests.

### *The question of full-time schooling*

Here we come to the issue which is uppermost in the minds of the Italians themselves and overshadows all the changes in primary education that are under consideration: the question of prolonging the time which pupils spend at school. The normal school timetable is a 24-hour week (usually broken down into 4 hours each day, 6 days a week). Teachers' working hours



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correspond to this timetable. The traditional view was that these relatively short hours gave sufficient time to teach children the three Rs and send them home for the afternoon, thereby avoiding the need to organise canteen services.

In addition, many local authorities took advantage of the 4-hour day to make the most economic use of school premises by organising two shifts, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon. This system, known as the *doppio turno* (double-turn or shift), was relatively widespread, especially in the densely populated, poor communes of the South; in 1980 it affected 4.4 per cent of the primary school population[4].

After World War II, however, schools began to be seen as going beyond the three Rs to provide a wider education, and the limitation of schooling to a half-day was found to be too constraining. How could all school activities be fitted into it – physical education, introduction to art, awareness of the environment? It is true that, thanks to local initiatives, *doposcuola* (after school) activities had often been set up in the afternoon, but these were an optional extra.

Through an Act in 1971 and a Decree in 1972, the Italian authorities tried to break out of the old framework, while taking advantage of the *doposcuola* initiative, and introduced an experiment known as *tempo pieno* (full time). "Full time" means that a school is provided with extra staff resources (State teachers) so that children can attend school about 40 hours instead of 24 hours a week. This is a big jump and requires considerable extra resources, since the individual teacher's working hours have not been increased.

The basic 24-hour timetable set by curricular requirements remains the same, and the extra time has to be devoted to "integrative activities" which each school can and must define for itself. The term thus covers all kinds of educational propositions. One group of schools we visited in Rome offered twelve different activities (two per class): historical research, handwork, painting, modelling, do-it-yourself, body language, theatre, etc. These activities were run by 11 teachers, distinct from the 50 teachers in charge of this group of schools' 50 classes.

The legislature intended this to be *an experiment*, but there seems to have been no real experimentation. So far as choice of terrain, methods and means, or monitoring and assessment are concerned, the introduction of full- time schooling was in no way planned so as to test pedagogical hypotheses in a systematic and reliable way. Instead, it followed a fairly classic pattern of pedagogico-administrative innovation in that it was based on relatively vague general ideas, on which the new measures were based; the word "experiment" was perhaps intended simply to put some limitations on its extension.

The full-time experiment currently concerns 300 000 pupils (6.8 per cent of total enrolment) and just over 20 000 teachers. Thus the teacher/pupil ratio (for extra full-time activities only) is 1:14.3 and therefore *higher* than the normal ratio. From this standpoint, the introduction of a full-time system would entail the doubling of resources. For the moment the experiment demands an additional 10 per cent of resources in relation to the total number of classes. However, this proportion varies a good deal from one region to another (from 23 per cent in Molise to 2.6 per cent in Veneto), apparently for no logical geographical, social or administrative reason.

After a few years, 1973-1978, during which it expanded rapidly, the full-time system stagnated. It had now grown to a point where its merits could be assessed. Its extension along the same lines would be simply a slow generalisation; the ways in which it was to be applied would still be chosen haphazardly and in a somewhat arbitrary fashion.

But should it be generalised? Full-time schooling has certainly done much for the pupils from varying educational points of view. For their part, the teachers who have been able to practise these integrative activities have certainly learned a great deal. But there are clearly



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disadvantages too. The so-called "integrative activities" are not, in fact, truly integral. They may even be a hindrance to necessary pedagogical change by placing it in extracurricular hours, requiring extra resources and teachers. They may separate the teaching staff and the educators responsible for "integration". Finally, the scheme tends to eat up resources.

The Italian authorities had the scheme assessed by the Inspectorate in 1980/81, and now seem to be moving towards one less ambitious in terms of time and thus less costly, known as "extended time" rather than "full time". The aim would be not a 40-hour but a 30-hour school timetable, which seems reasonable. The real issues, however, still remain. Will this reorganisation of the school timetable be a general one, compulsory for all families, who at present can choose between schools which do or do not implement the full-time scheme? How will "integrative activities" be made part of a coherent teaching process? How will the whole body of teachers be able to take part in it? Will local authorities, which will be involved as concerns questions of premises, canteens and maintenance, be able to keep pace?

This latter question brings us to the point that extension of the school timetable is incompatible with the shift system mentioned earlier, and that practice is not yet quite extinct. Although during the past ten years it nas all but disappeared in the North, and been reduced by half in the Centre, in the South there has been a slight increase from 3.9 per cent of pupils in 1970 to 4.4 per cent in 1980. This is admittedly a small proportion of the total but it needs watching. The financial problems facing local authorities cannot be lightly dismissed. Commoner than the shift system are the restrictions that have had to be imposed on canteen services; in many communes such services are provided only during the winter months.

*Curricula and education*

We believe that the question of extended time is tied up with that of curricula. Present curricula were drawn up by the Ministry of Education in 1955. They were not changed when lower secondary schools were created in 1962, nor when state-run pre-primary schools were set up in 1968, nor when lower secondary school curricula were reformed in 1979. As can happen in a centralised system, the ideological and even the political stakes at issue in such a change are exaggerated, and change can be frequently blocked by the acrimony of the argument.

To put it more clearly, education has changed, but in isolation. It has been changed to suit local initiatives, individual teachers or schools where the staff has been able and willing to define common concepts. This "uncontrolled" change, as it is sometimes called, has even, since 1968, been outside the control of the administrative and pedagogical authorities and of the inspectorate.

As a result, an enormous variety of concepts and practices, from the most conventional to the most outlandish, has developed as teachers generally have tried to reconcile the requirements of "primary" education, the demands for a more open approach, and adjustment to the profound changes in children's behaviour.

Proposed new curricula have already been studied by a commission comprising representatives of all the interested parties. The commission has completed its work, the matter now rests with the government, and Italian primary education should soon be given new terms of reference. From what we know of these terms, they should meet with general approval. An attempt will be made to go beyond an artificial conflict between instruction and education in the wider sense, and to base the expansion of instruction, which is considered to be indispensable, on educative action which puts the emphasis on socialisation and pays attention to the children's affective development. It is from this point of view that the "integrative activities" will be a touchstone of the reform. The Italian curricula are also likely

to contribute in an interesting manner to the modification which is now becoming apparent in the debate on primary education. Without giving ground at all on the question of widening horizons and methods, the emphasis is being shifted towards ensuring the success of "cultural literacy training" and seeing to it that children acquire the basic skills they need to gain access to knowledge, not withstanding their wide variety of interests.

It also seems likely that as concerns the last years of the primary cycle, the new directives will recommend a progressive specialisation among teachers offset by teamwork, to ease the transition to lower secondary school methods.

However, while the establishment of new curricula is an important milestone for schools impatient to redefine their own status, anxious to reach a consensus and well aware of all the subtleties of thinking about teaching as it is still practised in the classroom, it involves teachers and pupils as they are, in the trying conditions of the everyday world.

This is all the more true in that administrative change has sapped central authority and created the conditions conducive to extensive self-management by teachers. The new institutions responsible for school administration will be described later in this chapter; let it simply be said here that adaptation of curricula, pedagogical planning, inter-disciplinary cooperation, choice of textbooks, assessment of pedagogical action and ways to help pupils in difficulty, are all freely discussed in teachers' assemblies. Now that all grading of individual teachers has been abolished, their work is assessed only at their own request by an "evaluation committee" elected by the teachers.

So everything depends on the teachers and on their attitudes, their professional abilities and the ways in which they interpret the curricula in the individual schools. And obviously the margin for interpreting a curriculum is very wide. So it would be hazardous to try to predict whether Italian primary schools will succeed in the officially proclaimed aim of " a fuller instruction in a more educative school".

It seems to us that the main stumbling block is likely to be, not so much teachers' attitudes but rather the limitations of their professionalism. The vast majority entered the profession without any special training, even though a good third of them studied at university to degree *(laurea)* level. They learned on the job. The advantage is that they acquired a taste for the practical approach; the disadvantage, that they are tempted to keep repeating the pedagogical notions which enabled them to "set up". In Italy as elsewhere, what teachers need is not so much ideal curricula but a variety of tried techniques. If in many schools the ideas of "programming" and "evaluation" remain a dead letter, is this not largely due to the fact that teachers are not equipped with the necessary conceptual instruments?

In Italy as elsewhere, primary schooling comes in for a great deal of criticism. Secondary school teachers have the impression that it has not done its job and has neglected the three Rs, even though a great deal of time is devoted to them. And other critics can say, apparently with equal justification, that too much attention is paid to basic instruction. These contradictions may be due to the inadequacy of the techniques themselves.

While the initial level of primary school teachers training in Italy does mean that the problem of continuing training is particularly acute (and we shall return to this later) the question still remains – what are they to be trained for, and how? We cannot close our eyes to the fact that primary education everywhere is finding it difficult to improve on unscientific classroom techniques and work out more effective methods which ensure that *all* children acquire the elementary cognitive learning skills. This is a challenge to the education systems of all the OECD countries. The development of our human resources will largely depend on its being met.

## Lower secondary education (middle school)

### *Unification completed*

The middle school in Italy dates from 1963. Developments over a number of years[5] and much discussion had prepared the way for the radical decision to unify education and, above all, the schools and teaching staff providing it for the last three years of compulsory schooling – the first three of secondary education.

Since the last OECD review, the middle school has moved much further along the road to a unified comprehensive system. The 1963 curriculum included certain optional subjects, the original reason being the role of Latin. Not taught during the first year, compulsory in the second year (in the form of an introductory course linked to the teaching of Italian, with an extra three hours added to the timetable for the purpose), Latin became once more an optional extra in third year. Pupils were allowed to choose "applied technical education" instead of Latin. It was also possible to take no optional subjects. Music, compulsory during the first year, became an optional extra for the following two.

The 1977 reform, implemented in timetables and curricula established in 1979, abolished all optional extras and did away with Latin in middle school. Italy thus followed the reform through to its logical conclusion; education is now completely undifferentiated.

Some other features of the new timetables may be mentioned. Weekly classes have increased in volume from 25 or 27 to 30 hours. The trend here is the same as for the primary schools and brings the same problems as regards premises, canteens and abolition of the shift system. All the subjects taught gain by this increase. Italian, history, geography and civics are taught by the same teacher, who thus spends 11 hours (over a third of the timetable) with his or her class. Mathematics and science share a common section of the timetable (6 hours) and are taught by the same person. Lastly, technical, artistic and musical skills and physical education are taught 2 hours a week, without interruption, throughout the 3 years. All in all, 11 hours for Italian and the humanities, 3 hours foreign languages, 9 hours science and technical education, 4 hours art and music, 2 hours physical education and 1 hour religious education.

This is a fairly well-balanced and varied menu, with two main dishes sandwiched between cultural self-expression and initiation to science. But it is still a fixed menu, with a rigid timetable which is the same throughout the country.

### *Flexibility*

The 1977 Act sought to introduce a degree of flexibility, in the form of the "160 hours": 160 hours a year (i.e. the equivalent of 5⅓ weeks or 32 five-hour school days) may be set aside for extra tuition for backward pupils or supportive teaching or for "integrative activities". The respective shares of these various activities, their form and the way they are fitted into the timetable – all these questions are left to the individual establishments to decide. This scheme was introduced in the school year 1979/80, and it is still too soon to make an assessment of it. As often happens, this reform was something of a challenge to the imagination of educators. The framework had been defined, but not the content, and schools had to make provision for days or weeks of "support" without knowing exactly what they would do with them. Unsurprisingly, these periods were often used for no more than a repetition of the lessons already given, by the same teachers to the same pupils, using the same methods. As for the "integrative activities" fitted into special periods, they tended to be kept too separate from the educational curriculum, as had already happened when "full time" was implemented in primary schools.

Indeed, the "full time" system exists at middle school level too, although there have been fewer experiments than in the primary schools. Strangely enough, it has not been officially abolished now that normal school hours are longer. Patently, however, in its present form it is unlikely to have any future, because it is so expensive. We visited one middle school in Rome where the teacher/pupil ratio was 1:6.7[6]. The work done there was excellent, but how could such staffing conditions be generalised? The full-day would only be possible on a larger scale if teachers were expected to work longer hours than at present.

The old *doposcuola* system is also still in existence, offering a minimum of 10 hours a week, free of charge and optional, in the afternoon, and used either for supervised study or educational activities which attract varying degrees of interest. These facultative "after-school" activities in fact constitute a differentiating element in the context of unified education, which may appear to be residual but dies hard.

*The question of individualisation*

Like all those systems which seek to achieve uniformity in the traditional framework of collective education, the Italian system also has to face the problem of providing ample opportunities for individualised learning and, like all of them, finds it hard to solve. The 1977 and 1979 official texts stress this point. They introduced, for example, individual assessment of pupils to replace the traditional marking system. This assessment must evaluate the pupil's progress - or lack of it – against his own previous level and the objectives which have been set for him.

If it is to be genuine, this kind of assessment obviously entails profound changes in traditional teaching methods. It amounts, in the end, to assessing the work of the educator as well as that of the pupil, just as stringently and perhaps even more so.

Quite logically, therefore, the official texts stress the need for planning and evaluation of teaching methods at class and school level. Again logically, the examination for the *licenza media*, the first cycle certificate on which admission to the second cycle of secondary studies depends, has been changed. In addition to written and oral examinations on the various subjects, it now includes an interview bearing on all subjects *(colloquio pluridisciplinare)*, intended to be the culmination of a collective continuous assessment.

This series of reforms has set out, clearly and coherently, the objectives and methods of the middle school. All concerned agree that to begin with the real situation was far removed from this ideal and it is still not much nearer.

It would be easy to be ironical about this kind of normative, dogmatic and undifferentiated reform which seems to fly in the face of all the educational principles it preaches. Would a well-planned "pedagogy for success" run the risk of placing almost the whole of the teaching profession in a situation of failure because the aims set are unattainable as things stand? But such irony would be misplaced. Faced with a teaching profession which now manages its own affairs and is thus in direct touch with reality, society, represented by the government of the day, has to define what it expects from its schools. The Italian definition has the merit of being clear: no socio-cultural differentiation, no selectivity of a didactic nature and personal attention for everybody.

This was a welcome clarification. We were often told that the middle school suffered from lack of certainty as to its purpose and that this led to too many different educational practices and even ideas as to what a school should be, ranging from excessive concern for "socialisation" to obsession with what is known in Italy as "culturalism". It should be added here that in not a few cases the supposed uniformity of education has not even gone so far as co-education, some schools still having separate classes for girls and boys.

Two vital questions still remain to be answered:

*a)* Is it possible to demand individualised treatment for each pupil according to his or her ability and interests and yet still maintain, as compulsory standard practice, rigid frameworks for classes and timetables and compartmentalised subjects?

*b)* Where are the educational instruments necessary for individualisation? Our earlier comments on primary school reform can be repeated here, word for word. And in this second case the answer will be all the harder to find in that none has been found in the first.

Trapped within a framework that is still quite rigid, and lacking any reliable instruments to explore the question of individualisation, many teachers and schools tend to stick to familiar ground, even when they know very well how arid it is.

One way of measuring progress might be to look at the trend of an indicator characteristic of the Italian education system, namely repeats and drop-outs. It is considered that there is a given starting level for middle school and that far too many pupils have not been brought up to that level by the primary schools – so the first year serves to settle that question. The repeating rate, which had fallen substantially between 1963 and 1976 (to 8 per cent) has since risen again (up to 12.5 per cent in 1982). The drop-out rate oscillates regularly at around 4 per cent, plus an additional 4 per cent during the second year. These are national averages, which tend to mask the pronounced differences between regions, the South being much worse affected than the North. If the effort to individualise education succeeds, it should help to discourage the attitude which considers that going up from one class to the next constitutes a sort of examination success.

*Four difficulties*

To conclude, we would mention four difficulties to which the teaching profession attaches importance and which have also struck us as observers.

*Guidance.* Of its very nature the middle school, which is now entirely uniform and offers no options, does not prepare children in any way to be able to make choices. And yet the choices that have to be made on leaving middle school are of considerable importance, and extremely difficult. Guidance therefore calls for special training, and yet practically no such training is given. The law distinguishes between vocational guidance, for which the regions are responsible, and educational guidance, which is the prerogative of the State. Judging from what we saw, the regions have only skeleton guidance services, and educational guidance is non-existent. It has to be said that the present system offers little incentive for concern with such a system. Since pupils are entirely free to choose between the various streams leading to the upper secondary cycle, school authorities feel under no obligation in this respect.

We would not recommend the creation of a specialised service operating outside the schools. In Rome we saw one middle school which proved that the teachers, acting alone, could provide intelligent and effective training in the art of choosing. The "160 hour" framework would be ideally suited to this purpose. Experiments like the one in Rome, and the instruments evolved through it, should be made more widely known.

*Links with the other cycles.* The fact that guidance works badly is largely due to poor communication; the middle schools seem to be unaware of what goes on in the upper secondary schools, which means they are unable to provide useful information about them. Similarly, the gulf between the primary and middle schools, although deplored by both sides, is largely responsible for the failure of so many children to make the transition between them successfully.



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All institutions are bound to be inward-looking, and the problem is not specific to Italy. But to solve it, could not Italy take advantage of the liaison facilities offered by the "20 hours a month" in the teachers' contract set aside for consultation among teachers (see next section)? It might also be considered that consultation presupposes concrete issues, and these are provided in ample measure in the forthcoming reforms in the primary and upper secondary schools.

*The teaching of foreign languages.* This is a matter of concern in a great many countries, and Italy is no exception. Many hours and a great deal of money are spent on it, with disappointing results. In Italy the difficulties are even more acute because of the discrepancy between pupils' wishes (80 per cent of them want to learn English) and the teachers' qualifications (many of them were trained at a time, not so far distant, when French was the dominant foreign language). Because of the demand, some teachers have hastily changed over from one language to the other. What usually happens, however, is that there is an equal number of teachers of each language at a given school, so that the pupils have to draw lots; thus some of those who wanted to learn English have nevertheless to learn French. This is unsatisfactory, but so is having to learn the language of one's choice with a teacher who scarcely knows it. There is also an over-investment in classical languages at the expense of modern languages (see the relevant section in Chapter III).

*School facilities.* The expansion of science, technical and art education decided upon in 1979 may well remain a dead letter unless schools can be provided with adequate facilities. Visiting Italian schools, we were struck by the contrast that, while there is plenty of staff (including service staff), there is a relative lack of facilities. Library and documentation services constitute another facility conspicuous by its absence and one which will be provided only if the necessary specialist staff is somehow or other made available. Such services are essential if teaching methods are to be individualised and pupils encouraged to work on their own. Certainly we saw that each school possessed a room full of books, but if stocks are to be renewed and enriched and used to the best purpose, constantly at the disposal of pupils and teachers, permanent staff must be put in charge of them. Would not this be one very good way of employing the surplus staff found in some areas?

The same applies to equipment and premises, which are the responsibility of local authorities[7]. Their condition thus depends on the latter's budget as well as on the degree of interest shown. However, the way administrative responsibility is allocated does nothing to encourage such interest. Local authorities have no say in essential educational questions. Moreover, the allocation of responsibility within the school establishments, which we shall discuss next, means that they are out of touch with the schools' everyday problems and informed of them only when they are called upon to provide funds.

## School administration

With the exception of a few differences arising from the special administrative and financial status of technical and vocational institutes of the upper secondary cycle[8], the following remarks apply to all Italian pre-primary, primary and secondary schools.

Since 1974 there have been sweeping changes in the way educational establishments are administered. Heads *(direttori didattici)* of schools in the pre-primary and primary sectors *(circoli)*, and principals *(presidi)* of middle schools, *licei* and institutes are now executives working with deliberative bodies – depending on the subject, the *consiglio di circolo*, the *consiglio d'istituto* or (representing the teachers) the *consiglio dei docenti*. Heads of



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establishment, who are the only members of these bodies appointed by the administrative authorities, are assisted in their executive functions by a *giunta esecutiva,* an executive committee elected by the school council. The other bodies which complete this picture of participation and administration are the councils for classes in the secondary schools or levels in the pre-primary and primary schools.

The school councils and the executive committees which stem from them comprise an equal proportion of elected teachers and parents. The school council is chaired by a parent and the executive committee by the head of the establishment. Class councils include, together with the teachers concerned (usually 7 in a middle school), 5 elected parents. In upper secondary schools, elected pupils fill half the number of parental places. Compared with other countries, this participatory structure is a simple one since neither local authorities nor socio-economic interests are represented, and is remarkable for the important role allotted to elected parents.

It appears, indeed, that the legislators' intention was to involve parents to a large extent in the workings of the education system. In practice, the creation of these collegial bodies has placed teachers with their backs to the wall, defending their own territory inch by inch. Parents have had to abandon the idea of being full partners in school management, and the *consiglio dei docenti,* the body where teachers meet among themselves, has finally gained the upper hand over the school council. This may well be a matter for regret.

These collegial bodies meet frequently. This is made easier by the "20 hours-a-month" system. In addition to the 18 hours a week he must spend on teaching (in pre-primary and primary schools, 24 hours), each teacher owes a further 20 hours service each month. The way in which these 20 hours are to be spent is decided collegially; it may be in meetings with parents, supervisory tasks, refresher courses, consultation with colleagues, or in attending institutional bodies.

There is a certain amount of complaint about the mania for meetings that affects school life. Certainly the degree of efficiency achieved through these meetings is not proportional to the time that they consume. But they do provide an opportunity to reach that consensus, to which Italians attach importance, and consensus in an educational establishment has a great many virtues, even if it is reached along lines which are not necessarily the most imaginative.

There is one other striking feature. This form of organisation is in no way functional and has no hierarchy as regards responsibilities, no vertical organisation on the lines of departments concerned with individual subjects, no services set up to carry out particular duties such as guidance, documentation or outside activities. Certainly such organisation is in no way precluded since the school council may decide to create it but it is not part and parcel of these institutions, where the teachers' general assembly lies at the heart, and the guiding principle is direct democracy.

**The integration of the handicapped**

The large-scale and generous initiative launched at the turn of the 1970s with a view to integrating handicapped children in normal schools, in addition to the intrinsic interest of that initiative, may prove to be one of the most effective driving forces in bringing about change in compulsory schooling towards more individualised teaching. The broad lines of the scheme have already been documented[9]. In 1971 an Act concerned with aid for the non-war disabled and handicapped established their right to compulsory schooling "in normal classes in state schools" – except in those cases where a person suffers from a disability so severe as to

"prevent or make extremely difficult participation in the learning process or integration in normal classes". While its wording was ambiguous, this Act brought an end to the development of "special" classes or institutions. A Ministerial circular in 1975 removed all ambiguities by coming out in favour of the most extensive integration possible. A 1977 Act abolished all special classes and drew one less obvious conclusion on integration by deciding that specialised teachers would not be assigned solely to the service of handicapped children but would deal with any children in particular difficulty.

Today the system works on the following lines. A child recognised by a commission of experts to be physically or mentally handicapped is entitled to normal schooling, but also to special help. This help is provided by specially trained teachers, known as "support teachers", who are appointed to educational establishments in the proportion of one for every four handicapped pupils. Each handicapped child is entitled to six hours a week personalised tuition by the support teacher, that is, 4 x 6 = 24 hours' work a week. The maximum number of handicapped pupils per class is 2, and when a class includes one handicapped child it must not have more than 20 pupils in all.

In 1980-81, 91 460 handicapped children were integrated into normal classes, with 18 419 specialist teachers. By 1976 the figure was twice as high in the primary schools and four times as high in middle schools. It is estimated that today almost half of all schools take handicapped pupils.

This is a considerable undertaking. Principles have been clearly stated and substantial resources have been provided. It is possible now to make a provisional assessment of the results achieved and the difficulties encountered.

First of all, as regards resources, the standard of one support teacher for four handicapped has been fairly well maintained; it does not, however, apply to pre-primary schools, which must manage as best as they can. Furthermore, the qualifications of these teachers leave much to be desired. A fairly high proportion of the staff who used to teach in the old special classes have chosen to teach normal classes instead so that their skills are not employed. And not all the new support teachers have undergone the two years' special training. The biggest problem, however, probably lies in the fact that the great majority of ordinary teachers have been in no way prepared to cater for one or two handicapped children in their class.

Another difficulty as regards resources concerns not the schools' administration but overall care and assistance services, which are the responsibility of local authorities. These services are often inadequate. The education system is not a medical service; it can offer only education. But teachers often have the impression that they are left in sole charge and are thus answerable for the handicapped children's welfare, notably to their families. The determined manner in which all partners concerned in schools have shouldered their own responsibilities is thus all the more striking and, it may be said, all the more admirable.

The attitudes of teachers, parents and, even more noticeably, the "normal" children have almost always been positive. All have accepted normal socialisation of the handicapped, the aim principally put forward by the advocates of the reform. Paradoxically, the attitude of the parents of handicapped children and of the children themselves is frequently more reserved; parents are afraid that there will be less specialised help, and the children, especially those who were previously in special classes or special schools, are fearful of leaving a sheltered environment. These negative attitudes seem to be disappearing rapidly. Certainly there has been a great deal of talk about uncontrolled integration, and the improvisation that has been apparent throughout the operation to some extent justifies that adjective. Uncontrolled disintegration might also be alleged in that the tranquillity of ordinary classes has been upset by the introduction of a necessarily disruptive element. Is there another paradox here? It



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seems to us that integration has been all the better accepted and fitted into the everyday life of teachers and schools because everyone has been left to solve the problem in their own way. The situation called for warmth of feeling, and if there is one quality Italian teachers are not short of, that is it. Moral and social demands were made, and they were immediately met.

One equivocal point remains. The movement which pushed for integration certainly overestimated its positive effects on socialisation of the handicapped, and underestimated the importance of the technical skills involved in the operation. Now that integration is established, it is the schools themselves which must find a more balanced response. They are well able to do this, because school is not a society in a vacuum but one whose purpose is education in the widest sense of the word, as well as instruction. For schools, successful integration means integration in the learning process. But that calls for considerable effort on both the theoretical and the practical sides. Statistics showing that the number of support staff is sufficient are not enough.

Interesting prospects are already being opened up. Rather than taking handicapped children out of their class to give them individual tuition, support teachers bring together small groups of pupils who are in difficulty. This is one sign of the growing awareness that between the pupil administratively registered as handicapped and a number of other pupils there is a line of continuity. And if the handicapped child deserves a helping hand, why should not any child who is not doing well at school deserve one too?

More generally speaking, the presence of handicapped pupils justifies, in the eyes of the teaching staff and the pupils as a whole, the ideas of individual help, differentiation of objectives according to ability and behaviour, and personalised curricula. It does away with the picture of the class as a single unit, with a level to be maintained, the good pupils keeping up and the bad ones dropping out. No doubt this was not the objective when the integration of handicapped children was first put forward. In taking up the challenge, compulsory education in Italy shows it is aware that it must be a school for all and therefore that it must be capable of becoming a school for each individual.



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# III

## UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION

### A problematic sector

Italian educationists and politicians broadly agree that the upper secondary sector of education is problematic. The main reason for this lies in the fact that the sector has not undergone any major change since the Gentile Reform (1923) as far as the general education or academic track is concerned. On the other hand, the reforms of 1961 and 1969 reappraised the role of the technical-vocational sector and resulted in a far-reaching liberalisation of access to higher education.

Reflecting the volatile social background, the seventies were characterised by continuous efforts to bring about a fundamental reform of upper secondary education. However, up to 1983 all the initiatives undertaken by successive Ministers of Education had petered out. The most recent reform proposals nearly obtained parliamentary consent but were suspended even during our visit as a consequence of the dissolution of the Italian Parliament.

### Structural issues

First, it is essential to take note of the *ambivalent* position of upper secondary education within the education system as a whole. On the one hand, it is the base of the non-compulsory sector offering diverse routes towards higher education to young people who have completed the middle school. On the other hand, it is in theory if not always in practice, non-selective, the middle school leaving certificate giving a young person the right to choose whatever track he or she pleases; there are no entrance examinations. It is the pupils or *de facto* the parents, who determine choices. This point needs emphasising since the choice of track or decision to leave school palpably influences a young person's future job opportunities and mode of life.

Open access to the upper secondary sector is restricted only in so far as individual schools have to set limits to their annual intake for lack of space or appropriate facilities. In Bari, we were informed of the procedure which becomes necessary when there is too large a gap between supply and demand at certain individual schools, as evidenced by the requirement for preregistration before May 31 and the outcome of the final examinations in the middle school at the end of June. At a meeting held at the beginning of July the provincial director of education is informed of schools where enrolments are over-subscribed. As we were informed, he succeeds in solving the problem by "persuading" some parents to change their original choice of school. Thus, the director has to allocate some pupils to schools they have not chosen,

though they can follow the track of their choice. The criteria for allocation of schools are influenced by such factors as the proximity of the parents' residence and place of work to a school, whether brothers or sisters are already attending a school and the value of the middle school leaving certificate obtained. It is important to emphasise that allocations are handled without recourse to any entrance examinations. Every effort is made to adapt supply to demand, however burdensome that may be, rather than the reverse.

The liberal conditions for *the passage from lower to upper secondary education* must be contrasted with striking deficiencies in the structural and curricular relations between the two school levels. We were told that only in a few upper secondary schools was there any co-operation with middle schools. This took the form of meetings among teachers and visits by middle school pupils to neighbouring upper secondary schools during their last year. Such contacts tend, however, to be informal and generally there seems to be no co-operation at all between lower and upper secondary schools. This must be considered a serious omission, especially in view of the lack of career guidance in the middle schools described in the preceding chapter.

Viewed as a whole, the *public* upper secondary education sector is as diversified as in those many countries where traditional branches have been maintained. First, the *general education* sector is diversified into:

- the 5-year *classical lyceum (liceo classico)*
- the 5-year *science lyceum (liceo scientifico)*
- the 4-year *art lyceum (liceo artistico)*.

The comparative educationist looks in vain for a school centred on modern languages. The gap is not filled by the few communal or private *linguistic lyceums* (licei linguistici).

The *vocational sector* consists of:

- the 5-year *technical institute (istituto tecnico)*
- the 3-year *vocational institute (istituto professionale)*
- the 3-year *institute of applied arts (istituto d'arte)*
- the 3-year *training school for kindergarten teachers (scuola magistrale)* which, contrary to the *istituto magistrale*, does not lead to any maturità examination
- the 4-year teacher training institute *(istituto magistrale)*.

There are 31 autonomous tracks in technical institutes and some 150 different syllabuses combined in a variety of ways in the vocational sector as a whole.

The different branches of upper secondary education are isolated from one another. This fact is particularly astonishing with regard to the *school centres* which have been established as preparatory measures towards integration. The existence of such vertical border-lines handicap young people who want to transfer from one type of school to another. When such a transfer is realised, it usually entails the loss of one year's schooling.

Except for the *scuola magistrale*, all branches in the diversified upper secondary education sector have one essential feature in common: they offer their pupils the *maturità* and, therefore, as will be described later, free access to all courses in higher education. This equivalence across the board has been made possible by introducing supplementary courses in the teacher training institutes and art lyceums (one year each) as well as in the vocational institutes (two to four years).

Within upper secondary education there has been during the past two decades a remarkable internal shift in attendance at the different schools (see the changes between 1964/65 and 1980/81 in Table 1). Noteworthy also is the establishment of linguistic lyceums outside the public system.

The technical-vocational sector *(istituti tecnici* and *istituti professionali)* now caters for

Table 1. Upper secondary schools
Distribution of enrolments (percentage)

| | 1964-65 | | 1980-81 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | In total | 1st year | In total | 1st year |
| Vocational institutes | 15.0 | 19.8 | 18.5 | 23.9 |
| Technical institutes | 44.2 | 42.6 | 34.6 | 42.6 |
| *of which:* | | | | |
| • industrial | 18.4 | 17.8 | 11.7 | 11.4 |
| • commercial | 21.8 | 16.0 | 22.0 | 20.7 |
| • for surveying | | 6.7 | 5.6 | 5.4 |
| • other | 4.0 | 2.1 | 5.3 | 5.1 |
| Training schools for Kindergarten teachers | 0.8 | 0.1 | 1.3 | 1.6 |
| Teacher training institutes | 14.8 | 15.4 | 8.5 | 9.5 |
| Science lyceums | 8.1 | 7.7 | 16.3 | 12.9 |
| Linguistic lyceums | | | | |
| Classical lyceums | 4.9 | 11.5 | 8.5 | 7.0 |
| Institutes of applied arts | 1.5 | 2.0 | 1.4 | 1.6 |
| Art lyceums | 0.7 | 0.9 | 0.9 | 0.9 |
| TOTAL | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

*Source:* ISTAT (elaborated in *Rapport de base*, 1983, p.60)

two thirds of the 14-19 age group. Although recently experiencing a slight decrease in their enrolments, the technical institutes have reinforced their position to such an extent as to cater for 50 per cent of the age group. Indeed, it looks as though all the recent growth of the secondary sector can be attributed to them. The emergence of such new subjects as electronics and use of computers has significantly contributed to their increasing prestige.

Table 2. Upper secondary schools
Distribution of diplomas (percentage)

| | 1964-65 | 1974-75 | 1979-80 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Professional *maturità* | | 6.1 | 7.3 |
| Technical *maturità* | 46.0 | 44.8 | 47.5 |
| • industrial | 12.0 | 14.7 | 11.9 |
| • commercial | 21.2 | 16.9 | 23.9 |
| • for surveying | 6.5 | 8.4 | 6.4 |
| • other | 6.3 | 4.8 | 5.3 |
| Certification *(abilitazione)* of elem. school teaching | 24.2 | 14.5 | 11.8 |
| Scientific *maturità* | 8.9 | 18.6 | 20.2 |
| Classical *maturità* | 19.8 | 12.9 | 10.3 |
| Institutes for applied arts | | 1.2 | 1.2 |
| Arts lyceums | 1.1 | 1.9 | 1.1 |
| TOTAL | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

*Source:* ISTAT (elaborated in *Rapport de base*, 1983, p. 62).


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## Curricular issues

As regards curricula and syllabuses it is necessary to be aware of the firm and stable position of the core subjects, which is marked by emphasis on what is called "general culture" *(cultura generale)*. A traditional commitment to the core curriculum seems to deter planners from redressing the balance in favour of future-oriented content. The classical bias of the core curriculum is illustrated by these features (see Table 3):

*a)* the percentage of class time taken up by the humanities (Italian, ancient and modern languages, history, philosophy) and mathematics and natural sciences (including geography) amount to 68.3 and 20.9 per cent respectively in the classical lyceum and to 55.0 and 27.5 per cent, respectively, in the science lyceum;

*b)* Latin language and literature and Greek language and literature are allocated 28 per cent of the time in the classical lyceum; the science lyceum allocates 14.5 per cent of the time to Latin;

*c)* modern languages and literature are greatly under-represented in the classical lyceum with only four weekly lessons in each of the first two grades. In the science lyceum it is allocated 12 per cent of the time, a little less than Latin.

Compared with the overall position in Western Europe, these findings indicate the enduring status of the *classical lyceum* despite a steady decline in enrolments during the past two decades. Although the humanities in general and Latin in particular play a weighty role in

**Table 3. Distribution of weekly lessons**

A. CLASSICAL LYCEUM

Decreto ministeriale, 1st Dec. 1952

| | Grade | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Religion | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Italian language and literature | 5 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Latin language and literature | 5 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Greek language and literature | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Modern language and literature | 4 | 4 | – | – | – |
| History | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Geography | 2 | 2 | – | – | – |
| Geography and Sciences | – | – | 4 | 3 | 2 |
| Mathematics | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| Physics | | | | 2 | 3 |
| Philosophy | – | – | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| History of Arts | – | – | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Physical education | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Total | 27 | 27 | 28 | 28 | 29 |
| | Proportions (in per cent) | | | | |
| Ancient languages | | | 28.0 | | |
| Italian and Modern languages | | | 21.6 | | 68.3 |
| History, Philosophy, History of Arts | | | 18.7 | | |
| Mathematics, Geography, Sciences (incl. Physics) | | | | | 20.9 |
| Physical education | | | | | 7.2 |
| Religion | | | | | 3.6 |

the science lyceum, mathematics and science subjects play only a minor role in the classical lyceum. Moreover, the classical bias of the curriculum is reinforced by the predominance of traditional teaching methods. Even in the teaching of modern languages the emphasis is on translation, the mastery of grammar and study of classical literature.

Table 3 *(cont'd)*

B. SCIENCE LYCEUM

Decreto ministeriale, 1st Dec. 1952

| | Grade | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Religion | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Italian language and literature | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 |
| Latin language and literature | 4 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 3 |
| Modern language and literature | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| History and civics | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Philosophy | – | – | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| Geography and Sciences | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| Physics | – | – | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| Mathematics | 5 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Drawing | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Physical education | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Total | 25 | 26 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| | Proportions (in per cent) | | | | |
| Latin | | | 14.5 | | |
| Italian and Modern languages | | | 26.0 | | 55.0 |
| History, Philosophy | | | 14.5 | | |
| Mathematics, Geography, Sciences (incl. Physics) | | | | | 27.5 |
| Drawing | | | | | 6.6 |
| Physical education | | | | | 7.3 |
| Religion | | | | | 3.6 |

The modern alternative to the classical lyceum is represented by the vocational sector, as illustrated by the timetable of a *technical institute of surveying* which shows the following allocation of class hours:

- Humanities: 21.9 per cent
- Mathematics and natural sciences: 23.8 per cent
- Law: 3.1 per cent
- Physical education: 6.2 per cent
- Vocational studies: 41.9 per cent.

The strong representation of vocational study lays the ground for a sound occupational training. A weak point, however, is that workshops are established in the schools and there is no practical work in firms; it is up to the individual student to seek practical experience in firms during school vacations. This partially accounts for employers' complaints about the inadequate preparation for working life of many school-leavers and the uneasy relationship between the education system and the world of work. We shall return to this matter in the following chapter.

Table 3 *(cont'd)*

C. TECHNICAL INSTITUTE FOR SURV[illegible]ING

Decreto ministeriale, 1st Dec. 195[illegible]

| | Grade | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Religion | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Italian language and literature | 5 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| History and civics | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Modern language | 3 | 3 | – | – | – |
| Mathematics | 5 | 4 | 4 | 3 | – |
| Physics | 2 | 2 | 3 | – | – |
| Geography and sciences | 4 | 4 | – | – | – |
| Chemistry | 2 | 3 | 2 | – | – |
| Technical drawing | 4 | 4 | – | – | – |
| Agricultural technology | – | – | 4 | – | – |
| Economics and accountancy | – | – | 3 | 2 | – |
| Estimate | – | – | – | 2 | 5 |
| Technology of construction | – | – | 2 | 4 | 3 |
| Building | – | – | 4 | 4 | 7 |
| Topography | – | – | 4 | 8 | 7 |
| Law | – | – | – | 2 | 3 |
| Physical education | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Total | 30 | 30 | 34 | 33 | 33 |
| | Proportions (in per cent) | | | | |
| Italian language and literature | | | 15.7 | | 21.9 |
| History and civics | | | 6.2 | | |
| Mathematics, sciences, geography | | | | | 23.8 |
| Law | | | | | 3.1 |
| Physical education | | | | | 6.[illegible] |
| Religion | | | | | 3.[illegible] |
| Vocational subjects | | | | | 41.9 |

## Teacher training institutes

The teacher training institute *(istituto magistrale)* deserves special mention, its very existence having become an issue in the current debate over upper secondary reform. The identity crisis of the teacher training institutes, which cannot be solved by means of internal experiments and innovations as in other types of school, stems from the process of change in the whole realm of teacher training. Its traditional function was quite unequivocally to train primary school teachers. This function will become obsolete when the education law of 31 May 1974 *(decreti delegati)* is eventually promulgated. The practical consequences of the application of this law and the public controversy surrounding it will be considered in the special context of teacher education. Here we are concerned with how the status and function of the teacher training institute have been affected by recent developments.

First, the impact of falling rolls in the schools reduces the demand for primary school teachers. Students are already reacting to the phenomenon of declining career prospects in



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primary schools by attending a one-year supplementary course and then, after passing the full *maturità* examination, embarking on university studies.

Even though the direct vocational speciality of these institutes should disappear, they might continue to subsist in another form. Current experiments in the teacher training institutes aim at extending the curriculum in the direction of the human science track which has been foreseen in the plans for a major educational reform. It should be noted that a large number of the teacher training institutes are private (mostly Catholic) schools whose principals and teaching staffs are strongly in favour of preserving them.

**The "maturità"**

The *maturità (esame di maturità)* plays a central and dual role in the education system. On the one hand, the *maturità* certificate testifies to a young person's completion of upper secondary school and the acquisition of "general culture" at an academic level. On the other hand, it constitutes the one condition for higher education entrance.

In the process of transforming upper secondary education from an élite to an open sector and including technical-vocational courses in the group of terminal awards qualifying for higher education entrance, the *maturità* certificate, which formerly related only to university entrance, has developed into a general certificate and a multi-purpose warranty of achievement. This change pertains more or less to the whole of European education but specific features of the Italian variant call for the following observations.

The present structure of the *maturità* examination and its inherent contradictions may be traced back to the history of the past two decades. The extension process started in 1961 when the technical institutes were given the right to hold *maturità* examinations after a solid block of general education subjects had been included in their syllabuses. The law of 1961 confined this right of access to "correspondent" (in this case technological) courses, thereby following the analogous examples of the teacher training institutes and the art lyceums. It was, however, the radical changes brought about by the laws of 1969 which liberalised the *maturità* examination in a threefold way:

- First, the status of the terminal awards given by the technical institutes *(diploma di maturità tecnica)* was raised to that of a general qualification for higher education of any kind.
- Secondly, the *maturità*-holders of the teacher training institutes and the art lyceums were given the opportunity to attend one-year supplementary courses in their own schools leading to the general maturity certificate. As noted above, this extension has significantly changed the function of the teacher training institutes within the education system.
- Thirdly, within the 3-year vocational institutes *(istituti professionali)* and institutes of applied arts *(istituti d'arte)* the introduction of two-to four-year supplementary courses also enabled students to obtain a general qualification for higher education entrance.

Thus, except for the 3-year training schools for kindergarten teachers *(scuole magistrali)* and the conservatories *(conservatori)*, with their specific career orientations, the whole range of upper secondary education has become part of the extended maturity system.

The development is confirmed by the increase of annual *maturità* graduates from 168 469 in 1967 to 329 326 in 1980. The consequences or this increase for post-secondary enrolments will be dealt with elsewhere. Here it is important to note some of the consequences for the examination itself. The organisation of the examination system is highly centralised. It

is the Ministry of Education which every year, four months before the examinations, selects the topics to be treated in the written and oral examinations for all schools in the country.

What should be examined is complicated by the fact that there was no definition of the concept of *maturità* in the laws of 1969. This omission has inevitably led to a great deal of confusion about what ought to be the optimum balance betwen the subjects making up 'general culture' and vocational subjects. Stability has been achieved with regard to the position of Italian language and literature as a compulsory subject in both the written and oral examinations and to the provision giving each candidate freedom to choose one of the oral examination subjects. On the choice of the second written subject and two out of the four oral subjects, however, the Ministry has tried various strategies which have raised critical questions both among teachers and the public. The controversial issues in such debates are well known to observers of the European educational scene as a whole. They relate, above all, to the cultural status of certain subjects, e.g. whether geography or accountancy can compete with Latin or mathematics. Recognising the European and, indeed, world-wide prevalence of this curricular issue it seems, nevertheless, that the Italian variant is especially loaded as a result of the classical bias mentioned above.

It is also a question of how recent trends towards a re-weighting of languages in the choice of the examination subjects have been mainly motivated. One can assume that beside a desire for a certain revaluation within the "general culture" subjects, some demands expressed by universities and employers have had to be taken into account.

Another difficult point is the assumed necessity of objective assessment. It is obviously affected by the *procedure* for administering examinations, which reveals a striking dichotomy. On the one hand, the Ministry sets the organisational frame and exerts considerable influence over the choice of subjects. On the other hand, the *Examination Boards*, consisting of a president (a university professor or an upper secondary school teacher) and five other members (one of whom is a teacher of the school where the examination takes place), enjoy a wide range of freedom in determining the examination marks. Justifiable objections can be raised against this comparatively strong element of subjectivity. Apart from the fact, however, that each decision has to be made separately by the individual board member, the Italian variant shows the imperfection of all examination procedures, including those based on objective testing.

**Socio-cultural determinants**

The structural and curricular development of the upper secondary education sector is connected with noticeable changes in the social origins of its intake. The technical institutes, in particular, offer upper secondary education to social classes who formerly left school at the end of compulsory schooling. Another trend towards greater equality of educational opportunity is signalled by the increase of female enrolments (1980: 47 per cent), though these vary greatly according to the type of school. The classical lyceums, for example, seem to hold a special attraction for girls. At the same time, the possibility of acquiring a double qualification no doubt explains the increasing attractiveness of the technical institutes and, to a lesser degree, the vocational institutes for boys. Trends in female enrolments must be interpreted in the light of employers' recruitment policies and the continuing overt or latent prejudice against the employment of girls in certain occupations.

The most significant socio-cultural determinant is the *geographic location* of the school, in particular the gap between North and South. The "Six Subject Study", promoted by the

International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) and carried out in 1970, placed Italy below all developed countries but this outcome was caused by the extremely low results obtained by the southern schools in the sample. A later survey in 1980, though based on a smaller sample, confirmed the previous results. This contrast was confirmed by the evaluation of "Experimental Schools" which also confirmed the existence of a North-South gap.

The North-South gap in school achievements is due to a variety of complex factors. There is the overall socio-economic environment and the regional and local conditions of the labour market in particular, for example the connection or lack of connection between the qualifications offered by upper secondary schools and the demands of the local labour force.

Generally speaking, the choice of upper secondary schooling is still largely governed by family attitudes towards the conventional prestige scale: classical lyceum – science lyceum – teacher training institute – technical institute – vocational institute. This hierarchy of esteem can be especially noticed in the southern regions, whereas in the northern regions there is an increasing realisation of the value of technical and vocational institutes, especially as they are often well equipped and offer many of their students qualifications leading directly to jobs.

**Experimental programmes**

The Presidential Decree *(Decreto Presidenziale)* of 31 May 1974 authorised the experimental programmes that have affected all levels of schooling. There has been a continual increase in authorised projects reaching a total of 426 in the school year 1981-82. A distinction is drawn between maxi-experiments (1981-82: 177) and mini-experiments (1981-82: 182). While the first category is concerned with structural reforms, for example the introduction of new or the revision of existing courses, the second consists of curricular reforms within existing syllabuses. Each experiment must be approved by the Ministry of Education.

The upper secondary sector is heavily involved in the experimental programme. This is scarcely surprising given that the long delay in introducing the projected overall reform has left many immediate problems to be tackled. The main motivation lying behind many individual projects is as follows:

*a)* Schools are obliged to develop new courses because their syllabi do not adequately respond to current demands and expectations. A good instance may be those technical institutes for girls whose courses used to be focused on conventional forms of house-keeping. Facing significant reductions in their enrolments, many have reorganised their curricula by introducing courses in practice-oriented modern languages or social work.

*b)* The introduction of one-year supplementary courses into the teacher training institutes, qualifying their students for admission to higher education, has led to initiatives which aim at revision of the syllabus structure as a whole with special regard to the changing position of this type of school in a young person's career. Similar initiatives have occurred in the art lyceums.

*c)* New demands have been voiced for modernisation of the general cultural component in the curriculum. This has resulted, among other changes, in the reinforcement and extension of modern language tuition both in classical and science lyceums (in "experimental" classical lyceums the modern language course, until now confined to the first two grades, is being extended up to the 5th).

*d)* Within the technical-vocational sector new courses, for example in electronics, information technology and programming, respond to demands from the labour market. The experimental programme of 1981-82 allocated to this category, which has not been subsumed in the data mentioned above, 32 experiments conducted in technical institutes of the industrial type and 36 in technical institutes of the commercial type.

There is no doubt about the value of the experiments. For the most part, they have been an anticipation of the ever-postponed reform and as such have served to make the issues more clear. In a centralised system, they stimulate schools and teachers to launch initiatives and to innovate. Nevertheless, the delay in implementing the major reform necessarily results in counter-productive attitudes, in spite of the commitment of teachers about which we were repeatedly assured. Beside this overall gap between the orientation of the individual experiments and the unconsolidated educational policies (as regards upper secondary education), the following factors hamper the progress of the experimental programme:

- Insufficient participation of the regional and local school authorities (which is to be rectified by the IRRSAE to be described in Chapter V);
- Financial constraints leading to cuts in the budgets provided for the experiments;
- Widespread suspicion of empirical research, rooted in the traditional view of Italian educational studies as a theoretical discipline.

**Prospects**

The projected reform is remarkable for two main reasons. First, it is focused on a significant modification of the present structure with a view to integrating the individual tracks of upper secondary education to the optimum extent. Secondly, the project takes account of the needs of the "recipients", i.e. the higher education sector as well as the labour market, by envisioning some differentiation within the whole system.

The integrated component is to be assured by the extension of the *biennio*, consisting of the first two grades of upper secondary schooling. Originally restricted to the purpose of increasing the polyvalence of the first two grades within the highly diversified system of the technical institutes, the extended *biennio* is to cover the whole range of full-time schools. The project does not foresee the establishment of a special horizontal *biennio* school, but the organisation of biennio classes within the framework of the individual tracks (to be described below) and schools. Integration will be achieved by unifying the syllabuses in order to facilitate transfers from one track to another.

The diversified *triennio* will cover three grades in *all* tracks and is to build upon the *biennio*. It seems that only the training schools for kindergarten teachers and the music schools will remain outside. Thus the *modified upper secondary education area* will comprise the following structure of tracks with different sub-tracks replacing the existing types:

1. Artistic:
   *a)* Music
   *b)* Visual arts and decoration
2. Linguistic:
   *a)* Classical
   *b)* Modern

3. *a)* Juridical-administrative
   *b)* Economic
   *c)* Tourist (not yet clarified)
   *d)* Human sciences (still to be clarified with special regard to inclusion of the "psycho-pedagogic" component of *istituti magistrali*)

4. Natural sciences, mathematics and technology:
   *a)* Agricultural and agro-industrial
   *b)* Biology, hygiene
   *c)* Physics, chemistry
   *d)* Mathematics, computer sciences
   *e)* Physics, mechanics
   *f)* Physics, electronics
   *g)* Physics, electrotechnics
   *h)* Sciences of design and construction
   *i)* Transport.

The modern character of this far-reaching reform is indicated by the new appreciation of the social sciences as a subject area and by the amalgamation of science and technology within one track.

Apart from the practical problems of passing legislation and instituting a new structural and curricular framework, many questions remain open.

First, with regard to equality of educational opportunity, the future relation between the *biennio* in the school system run by the central authorities (long cycle) and the corresponding two grades in the regional training system (shorter cycle) needs to be clarified. The envisaged prolongation of compulsory school attendance from 8 to 10 years and the establishment of the "shorter cycle" should be acknowledged as a progressive step. Unless movement is guaranteed between the two "cycles", the existing dualism between the "national" and "regional" educational sectors will be perpetuated during a stage of a young person's career development that is crucial. In this context the question should be raised whether it is reasonable to build up a rigid dualism between national and regional institutions.

Secondly, the new *biennio* can certainly reduce the importance of co-operation between lower and upper secondary schools which is a serious lack in the present system. That does not mean, however, that the problem of links may be deleted from the agenda, given the maintenance of institutional separation between lower and upper secondary schools and the dualism just mentioned. Formal teacher meetings and reciprocal visits, useful though they are, provide imperfect solutions, unless reinforced by an effective system of career guidance.

Thirdly, the strategy of integration which points, among other things, to the foundation of genuine "school centres" may provide a promising base for easier transfer between the individual tracks but its efficiency will depend again on counselling and other support services. In this context, special attention must be paid to the task of lowering the drop-out rates, which are high, as demonstrated by recent school statistics.

Fourthly, one important aim of the projected reform is to modify the present *maturità* certificate by confining its function as an entrance ticket to university studies corresponding to those followed by a candidate in the upper secondary school. This approach does not imply a return to the *status quo ante* (i.e. beyond 1969) in so far as the restriction is to pertain to *all maturità* certificates, including those which are required in the tracks focused on languages or mathematics. Whether the introduction of a weighted *maturità* certificate can improve the present management of admissions to higher education, will certainly be influenced by

regulations for those *maturità* holders who wish to choose courses not corresponding with their upper-secondary studies. What the requirements of the proposed adjustment courses for this group of applicants will be is not yet clear.

Finally, we should like to direct attention to the interdependence between expectations of the reform in terms of promoting both equality of educational opportunity and achievement and the possible impact of the reform on the traditional prestige scale mentioned earlier. Cross-national inquiries have revealed the stubbornness of assessments relating to real or obsolete qualities of certain school structures and curricula. Recent developments have signalled changes in the prestige scale in favour of courses focused on science or technology. Such changes do not undermine at all the continuing legitimacy and social importance of classical curricula. They do offer the opportunity, however, to harmonise the functions of the education system with the socio-economic, political and human needs of the society to which it belongs.

# IV

## EDUCATION AND THE WORLD OF WORK

In Italy, as demonstrated in the preceding chapter, the education system plays the dominant role in preparing young people for the world of work. The guiding principle is that education and vocational training should form part and parcel of initial schooling and not be conducted, as in Germany for example, as a dual system. All young people are assumed to be capable of profiting from upper secondary education, though, of course, some of them choose not to do so. Thus, the schools are responsible for technical and higher level commercial training in the technical institutes and for the training of skilled manual workers and office workers in the vocational institutes. For those young people who choose not to proceed to an upper secondary institution training may be obtained through an apprenticeship contract, through learning on the job or through attendance at a regional training centre.

There are advantages and disadvantages to the education and training model adopted by Italy. One advantage is that motivated young people arriving at the end of compulsory schooling can choose freely from among several further education options. A second is that a young person who so wishes can combine attendance at general education courses with practical orientation towards a specific occupation or cluster of occupations. In Italy, the conviction is strong that technical and vocational education should be subordinated neither to short-term labour market needs nor to the demands of a single trade or profession. A third advantage is that genuinely open access to higher levels of education is assured by making it possible for an individual student to transfer from one type of upper secondary institution to another and ultimately to proceed, if so desired, to post-secondary education. A fourth advantage is that vocational and educational training have come to enjoy popular esteem. For if a majority of the children of the higher social classes still tend to opt for the classical and scientific gymnasia a majority of the age cohort leaving the middle school opts for a technical or vocational institute.

Italy can certainly claim that the pattern of education and training instituted since about the mid-fifties has been conspicuously successful both in providing the skilled manpower required to transform a primarily agricultural into a productive modern economy and in pursuing the egalitarian ideal of open access to education at all levels. There are disadvantages, however, to the Italian model as well as short- and long-term problems that have to be overcome.

The main disadvantage is the lack of flexibility between vocational and technical courses in face of the volatile labour market that has developed in recent years. On the one hand, there is too little provision for those who leave school at fourteen and cannot find a job and a lack of safety nets for the many young people who drop out of upper secondary institutions. On the



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other hand, some young people become locked into technical courses of long duration that are no longer sufficiently relevant to the actual occupational demand. A second disadvantage is that the labour market value of education and training qualifications has been diminished and is still diminishing. Italy suffers more than most countries from what has aptly been called 'the diploma disease'; there are far many more young people with upper secondary and university qualifications than there are corresponding jobs available. Indeed, a significant percentage of qualified young people cannot find employment at all, even if willing to accept jobs well below their nominal skill levels. There is a particularly low correspondence between certain upper secondary qualifications and job outlets. A third disadvantage is that the strictly vocational content of courses has shown a tendency to be reduced in favour of an increasing general education content. Of course, as pointed out above, the preservation of a strong general educational component in vocational education and training may be regarded as wholly desirable. However, when that component takes a given course far away from the requirements of the occupation or occupational sectors to which it is supposed to relate, then there is a risk that employers will start to look askance at the paper qualifications of job-seekers and prefer to recruit applicants whom they can train on the job.

These three disadvantages operate in Italy and in other countries having similar education and training models with varying impact according to the prevailing economic and social climate. They are felt most strongly during a period like the present when economic growth is sluggish and youth unemployment is running at a high rate. Two questions then arise. Should the Italian authorities envisage any fundamental changes in the existing pattern of education and training provision? Whether the answer to that question is yes or no, what temporary measures, if any, should be taken to combat the present rate of youth unemployment?

Quite evidently, the Italian authorities do not intend to alter the existing system in any fundamental way simply because they are satisfied that overall it is working well. Students have switched in gratifying numbers from the classical and scientific to technical tracks; forecasting manpower needs is an activity of limited value; imposing quotas on entry into the several educational levels and programmes is socially difficult and of itself would only enlarge the unemployment pool; many young people are very resourceful and, while still students, find part-time or full-time work mainly in largely unskilled and semi-skilled jobs. On the whole, we share the view of the authorities that the system does not require radical transformation. There are ways, however, in which the system might be strengthened over the long term and in which the effects of the current economic recession might be reduced.

One urgent need is to develop the guidance and counselling capacity. We have already touched upon this matter and singled out low achieving pupils in the middle school as being in particular need of regular counselling and career guidance. Here we would only stress that all young people require more purposeful and detailed advice not only about their personal abilities and aptitudes but about occupational trends. As things are, many of them are aspiring for careers beyond their intellectual capacities or in which there will be no openings for the foreseeable future. The Italian system permits students to change direction more easily than many other systems. Nevertheless, as already pointed out, many students enter courses for which they are not fitted and from which the only escape in practice turns out to be the negative one of dropping out.

We believe that there is a strong case for training a greater number of guidance and counselling specialists and devoting more hours in the timetables of institutions at all levels of secondary education to preparation for the world of work. Moreover, though it would be a difficult undertaking, we believe that a positive effort should be made to apprise a critical mass of teachers of the problems that their students are bound to encounter when seeking their first

jobs. Italy is not alone among OECD countries in having a great majority of teachers whose whole experience has been in academic studies successively as pupils, students and salary earners; many of them are simply not qualified to give appropriate advice. Somehow they need to be prepared for the new task of assisting their pupils to make realistic choices about their future careers.

Italy might also consider the case for reinforcing the apprenticeship system, which continues to work with success in several OECD countries and is economical as regards public expenditure. As in other countries where the formal education system has primary responsibility for education and training that system has become weak, though at the present time there are no fewer than 70 000 apprentices. Its prestige is low, it attracts little support from the public authorities and it has become difficult to set up new apprenticeship schemes. As far as we could ascertain, apprentices are often tied by tenuous contracts and receive little organised training and almost no general education. Without arguing that Italy should embark on an expansionist policy we would suggest that some positive encouragement might be given to apprenticeship schemes and that active steps should be taken to ensure that apprentices do receive a useful training and are enabled to continue with their general education. This would entail offering integrated courses for apprentices which would enable them to spend time in school as well as on the job and give them the opportunity to undertake other forms of training should they so wish.

There is in Italy a substantial amount of training under the sponsorship of government ministries and agencies – notably the Ministries of Labour, Agriculture and Defence – regional training councils and both nationalised and private firms. The most important sponsors of training are the regional councils, which are principally concerned with the training of semi-skilled and skilled workers. They subsidise courses for the unemployed, certain apprentices, adults requiring retraining or upgrading, and young people seeking their first employment. Their first priority is to facilitate the transition from middle school to working life of those school leavers who lack special skills. Their programmes are described as either 'initial training' or 'highly specialised training'.

Although committed to a formal model of initial education and training, the Italian authorities cannot ignore the fact that some young people drop out of middle school and a significant percentage of the age cohort quit the formal education system at the end of compulsory schooling, that is, immediately after middle school. Though lacking a paper qualification, some of these young people immediately find employment in small family businesses or on the family farm or, in the case of girls, in domestic work at home or in service. There remain those who must receive some vocational training in order to be eligible for a job. Italy has chosen to provide this training not through the centralised education system but through a network of regional structures in terms of a law on vocational training enacted in 1978. The theory, which is a sound one, is that the jobs appropriate to early school leavers are commonly located in their neighbourhood areas. The task of the regional authorities is to identify the scope and type of demand in local labour markets and to tailor short-term training courses accordingly. In this way young people can be trained with a specific job in view and local employers can expect to recruit employees with relevant training. At the same time, training can be related to what are perceived as realistic economic priorities.

The regional councils, which are intended to represent all the key interest groups, offer relatively few programmes on their own account and indeed we visited one council which offers no programme at all. Instead, they contract out programmes to a variety of providing agencies. They appear to be rigorous in recruiting no more students into programmes than there are anticipated job outlets available. Tuition is free and students are given meals but no pecuniary allowances. In two of the regions that we visited 35 per cent of the annual budget

comes from the EEC social fund. We took particular note of the useful practice of paying small and medium-sized firms to train young workers.

To all appearances these regional vocational training programmes are effective, though it must be pointed out that the breadth and quantity of programmes vary considerably from one region to another. Moreover, we wonder how many young people requiring training are being overlooked both by the upper secondary school sector and the vocational centres. The regional councils advertise their programmes extensively, distribute numerous annual prospectuses and arrange for talks about their programmes to be given in middle schools. It is still hard to believe that all the young people in need are aware of the full range and content of the programmes available in a context where the links between the regional councils and the upper secondary institutions are weak.

One caveat we would enter concerns the quality of teachers and instructors, most of whom, as we understand, have no formal qualifications. Learning by doing under the guidance of a practitioner is no bad thing but we would ask whether sufficient precautions are taken to verify the knowledge and instructional competence of teachers and to ensure that these are maintained at a satisfactory level, especially in those regions where the cadre of instructors has been built up since implementation of the act of 1978.

Several of the administrators and teachers to whom we spoke, on the school and regional council side alike, referred to the problem of inadequate coordination. The outstanding need is to ensure that the schools and the centres between them identify all young people requiring vocational help and provide together a sufficiently wide and complementary range of courses. A difficulty is that the centres offer two-year courses restricted to vocational training as against the three-year courses, including general education, offered by vocational institutes even when the occupational area, for example tourism, is the same. Many young people opt, not surprisingly, for two-year courses. Coordination between the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education at the national level and between the directorates of education and the training councils at the regional level will become even more essential when the duration of compulsory schooling is eventually extended by two years, otherwise there are bound to be continuing gaps in the overall provision.

The lack of adequate coordination among all those concerned with vocational education and training is a recurring theme in nearly all contemporary reports and we would not wish to give the impression that the situation in Italy is worse than elsewhere. It is obvious, however, that the school side is not well represented on the regional vocational councils and that, indeed, some school administrators do not even see the purpose of it. Similarly, employers and trade unionists are represented on national commissions but under-represented or not represented at all at the institutional level, though we must hasten to add that a representative of the employers at the national level informed us that employers' relations with the schools were rapidly evolving for the better and that their relations with the regional training councils varied from close to distant according to local circumstances.

On the basis of our limited encounters with representatives of employers and trade unions it would be rash for us to offer any positive recommendations. We would suggest, however, that there would be much to gain from systematically strengthening the links between educational institutions and the world of work. In particular, closer ties with employers might help to insure that changes in occupational demand patterns and in work organisation and processes could be more quickly reflected in revamped training courses and, where appropriate, new courses.

**Adults' needs**

Italy offers a typically variegated pattern of educational programmes for adults. The aggregate participation rate is high and steadily increasing but it masks significant gaps in the overall provision. As in most other countries, participation is high among the already educated and low among the under-educated. Thanks to the establishment of eight years of compulsory schooling, and the prevailing high retention rates in upper secondary and post-secondary education, Italy will eventually have an adult population with a satisfactory level of general education and only a nominal percentage of illiterates. Meanwhile, however, there exists the generation gap well known to most OECD countries : 67 per cent of adults did not complete compulsory school and 25 per cent did not complete primary school. Approximately 4.5 per cent of the adult population is illiterate.

We are aware of the formidable and largely successful efforts that Italy has made in post-war years to eradicate adult illiteracy and do not feel the necessity of commenting on that subject. We are also aware of the facilities for adult vocational training and of Italy's pioneering paid educational leave schemes but, again, see no need for comment. Nor do we think it would serve any useful purpose to discuss the general-purpose provision of adult education. However, our remit does require us to comment, if only briefly, on the question of the education system's role in bridging the generation gap in formal education since for many adults opportunities to improve their occupational status or to obtain greater job satisfaction are restricted by their lack of initial schooling.

The primary and middle schools are required to provide suitable programmes for adults who left school early to complete their basic education. Throughout the country, in 1982 about 50 000 adults participated in primary-level programmes and 140 000 in middle-school level programmes. These are encouraging statistics but they refer mainly to younger adults and the fact remains that a large percentage of adults, especially those aged over 40, who could profit from organised learning opportunities are not doing so.

We wonder if the conditions of study in the schools are not too exacting and if some principals and teachers do not actively or covertly discourage the attendance of adults at their schools. The curricula have been somewhat adapted to match the interests and life experiences of adults. Nevertheless, participants in middle school classes must attend for 360 hours and undertake work at home in order to keep abreast of their respective subjects. Thus, an adult must be highly motivated to participate and preferably live near the school where the classes take place. We had an opportunity to talk to several groups of adult students who were coming to the end of their course and who spoke with evident enthusiasm about what they had learnt and the stimulus that had been given to their work and leisure activities. They all agreed, however, that the course had required an enormous effort on their part and much tolerance from their close relatives and friends.

Another question concerns the advertisement of courses. We gained the impression that many potential students were not aware of the opportunities available to them. It might be desirable, therefore, to use unorthodox as well as conventional forms of publicity, starting from the premise that, in Italy as elsewhere, adults are much more likely to hear about an educational programme that could be to their advantage through word of mouth rather than through any other medium.

# V

# TEACHER TRAINING

## The dual structure

Unlike in most European countries, up to now teacher training in Italy has preserved its traditional dual structure. It is rooted in the duality of the teaching profession which in Europe emerged from the distinction between "academic" teachers (university graduates) and "elementary" teachers (qualified at non-university post-secondary institutions). The duality of the teaching profession reflects the duality of the traditional two-class pattern of education and the underlying social and political situation which used to prevail in all European countries.

Originally, the dual structure of teacher education derived from the vertical division of the school systems between academic (university-bound) secondary schools of selective character and non-selective "popular" schools with different aims and quality. As a result of the establishment of specific lower secondary schools organised in parallel with comprehensive systems, the historical duality in the teaching profession has been superseded by a new duality based on the horizontal principle distinguishing "primary" (in Italy: *elementare* in the changed connotation) and "secondary" school teachers. This is why today teacher education in Italy consists of two separate patterns :

- The training of primary school teachers in teacher training institutes *(istituti magistrali)*, which are organised as 4-year upper secondary schools;
- The training of teachers for upper and lower secondary schools at universities, for the most part in faculties of arts and philosophy *(lettere e filosofia)* and sciences *(scienze naturali)*, but also in specific *facoltà di magistero*.

This stocktaking needs to be completed by other information:

a) There is a special 3-year institution for the training of kindergarten teachers *(scuola magistrale)* which will remain outside our consideration.

b) The following comments will be focused on those students who are trained to cope with a "general education" curriculum (both at the primary and secondary levels). In an extended analysis particular attention would have to be paid to the particular problem of training of teachers for the vocational institutes. This category of teachers is mostly recruited from engineers, technicians and craftsmen who often have (or keep) their first jobs in enterprises such as building and construction. Generally speaking, criticism of the neglect of the educational component in the entire teacher training system (to be proposed below) includes this category of teachers.



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c) As regards the academic aspects of teacher training the *facoltà di magistero* is of particular interest, because it has been more closely connected with the functions of teacher training than the "classical" faculties mentioned above. It used to offer diploma-holders of the teacher training institute as well as practising primary school teachers their only chance to improve not only their professional competence but also their status within the civil service hierarchy by acquiring the academic certificate of *laurea*. Among the latter group special provisions have been made for teachers to be qualified for headships, while in general the attendance of the *magistero* opens the path to secondary school teaching. The *magistero* was thus established as a specific avenue to *laurea* for teacher training institute-leavers before the *maturità* reform of 1969 opened the academic tracks to them. Conversely, this reform has opened it to *maturità*-holders, and indeed recent developments have indicated its increasing attractiveness.

All this explains why, though conceived as the academic continuation of elementary teacher training and provided with a curriculum enriched by and oriented towards educational and psychological subject matter, the *facoltà di magistero* has not developed into a genuine "faculty (or school) of education". In many respects it has evolved as a mere replica of arts faculties.

**The neglect of practical training**

Of great significance for the traditional kind of teacher preparation is the neglect or even absence of any specific orientation towards the professional requirements of school teaching. This neglect stems from the academic training pattern in use at the universities. The object of traditional course studies is to impart an ability to undertake scientific and scholarly work and, moreover, to acquire a good "general culture". The individual study tracks are, compared to other countries, surprisingly wide and undifferentiated. Thus, many faculties of arts and philosophy have only three types of *laurea* (arts with classical or modern orientation, philosophy, history). In each track the special subjects are supplemented by an extensive course of basic philosophical studies.

Thus the laurea-holder has to cope with a *double handicap* when entering his teaching career. On the one hand, he may find himself obliged to teach a subject in which he has not specialised during his studies. On the other hand, he is pushed into everyday teaching practice without having been equipped with any knowledge of teaching methods and experience or having being exposed to courses with a basic educational, psychological and sociological content. This fundamental deficiency is, ultimately, rooted in the assumption carried over from the nineteenth century that an ability to learn at university level denotes an ability to teach at a lyceum.

The absence of any professional element in the university curricula would not have so detrimental an impact if the degree course were complemented by the provision of a "second phase" of specific training, as exemplified by the one-year graduate course in education at British universities or the "study seminars" *(Studienseminare)* in Germany, or the *centres pédagogiques régionaux* in France. The two examinations denoting the laurea-holder's avenue to permanent tenure in the civil service, namely the *esame di abilitazione* and the *concorso magistrale*, are reduced to the memorising of school syllabi and the presentation of a lecture on a selected theme in a probationary lesson. This "non-professional" process is especially anachronistic in the case of candidates who have graduated from a *facoltà di magistero* and



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have, therefore, acquired some basic teacher training or even some professional experience.

Surprisingly enough, the professional element in the traditional kind of primary school teacher training is also far from satisfactory. In the conventional syllabi of the teacher training institutes the educational component is represented only by the subjects of "philosophy and pedagogy" (with ten weekly lessons in total) and "psychology" (two weekly lessons) and practicals (three to four hours weekly) in the last two grades, which are, as a rule, confined to class-room observation. There are no full-time practicals in the form of "block sessions". In order to avoid bias in presenting this type of training which, as has been pointed out already, is likely to lose its traditional function, one has to pay attention to the "educational ethos" of many teacher training institutes, most of which are Catholic establishments. It is the "theory of an early vocation" which was put forward as a point in favour of maintaining the teacher training institutes and has gone into the modified plea for a "psycho-pedagogy" track in the new upper secondary education system proposed in the major reform under consideration.

**Teacher training between the reform law and its expected implementation**

On 31 May 1974, the Italian Parliament passed an Education Law *(Decreti Delegati)* stating that the qualifications needed for entering a career as a teacher at all levels, would include the completion of university studies. Since this Act nine years have elapsed, but the regulations necessary to put the law into practice have not yet been enacted. However, in the meantime, there have been *three important changes* affecting the structure of both the teaching profession and teacher training.

First, the former scarcity of teachers has been totally superseded by the emergence of a surplus. Today, there is an *overproduction of teachers* at all levels and in all subjects, technical-vocational subjects being excepted. Here we cannot investigate the problem in depth. It suffices to point to the paradox that on the one hand there are thousands of employed teachers without requisite formal qualifications while on the other hand increasing numbers of young people with the certificates of *laurea* and *abilitazione* in their hands face hopeless career prospects.

There is, however, one issue which is worth noting in particular, namely the trend whereby teacher training institutes are pragmatically abandoning their function of training primary school teachers. This silent transformation has been brought about by the fact that most graduates from teacher training institutes, finding direct doors to the teaching profession closed, in spite of the fact that their *diploma di maturità magistrale* includes the award of teaching proficiency *(abilitazione)*, are therefore opting to enter the alternative avenues of the traditional *(magistero)* or new options (one-year supplementary course, "full" *maturità*, faculty of arts or sciences) which can lead them to the *"laurea"*.

Second, the Law of 1974 has paved the way for the initiation of various *pilot projects* which aim at introducing into the preparation of secondary school teachers that educational component for which there is an urgent need. Special attention has been paid to two areas of innovation, in which the University of Rome has acted as a pioneer.

*a)* At the Romen *facoltà di magistero* a pilot project has been undertaken, directed towards the concept of the "teacher-researcher" who knows how to link the knowledge of his subjects (in this case history and geography) with a thorough insight into their structural and curricular foundations and into an adequate methodology of research, independently of the school level at which the future



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teacher will work. Empirical inquiries and experiments are considered as constituent parts of such innovative training; the search for interdisciplinarity is another element in the project.

b) A parallel approach has been made at the *faculty of sciences* aiming at the development of curricula which emphasize the need to integrate subject knowledge and expertise in teaching methods.

In 1979 these pilot projects were included in the *co-operative pre-service training programme* (PRESET) initiated by the Ministry of Education and OECD and joined by several universities in Northern Italy which formed a North Italy Co-ordinating-Group in order to exchange their experiences. This co-operative programme has gone through four phases:

- Elaboration of a background report on the state of the art (it was ready in May 1980);
- organisation of the seminar attended by 50 participants in the European Centre for Education at Frascati (December 1980);
- completion of several feasibility studies (1981-82);
- implementation of various experiments which have been continuing since November 1982.

Third, a law passed by the Italian Parliament in May 1982 has redefined the *procedures for recruiting teachers:* a new selective proficiency examination has been introduced combining the *abilitazione* and *concorso magistrale*". It will therefore lead the successful candidate to an appointment with tenure, whereby the first year of service is to be characterised by on-the-job training activities. This legal reform must be seen in the light of efforts to improve the proficiency examination in terms of "professional" quality. In this context it is necessary to take into account the organisation of "proficiency courses" which was foreseen by a law passed in December 1971. It had specified two kinds of courses:

- "Ordinary courses" for laurea-holders immediately on leaving university;
- "special courses" for employed teachers without the regular qualification *(abilitazione)*.

The emphasis of this innovation has apparently been laid on the latter type whose introduction is to fill a gap which had been opened during the period of teacher scarcity. The "ordinary courses", on the other hand, have been mostly organised by the teachers' associations and unions on a voluntary basis and the assumption of fee paying. Though acknowledging the usefulness of this innovation, it must be emphasized that the practice of teacher training is still far from being implemented.

## Prospects

### *Outlines of the reform*

The urgent need for a radical reform of teacher training seems to be generally accepted. In this field the deficiencies of the present provision are so obvious that even teachers and head teachers of conservative disposition in general educational discussions do not conceal their discontent. The crucial question, however, concerns both the scope and content of the innovations.

The law of 31 May 1974 has set the framework of the reform and defined the two essentials indicating its direction, namely:

a) establishing the whole of teacher preparation at the university level which necessitates a radical change in the training of primary school teachers;
b) the "professionalisation" of the training courses with regard to the levels at which student teachers aspire.

It is no cause for surprise that controversial arguments are focused on the question of how to co-ordinate specialist subject training with courses in teaching methods on the one hand and the educational core curriculum comprising psychology, sociology and educational theory on the other. The approach to the question must take into account the unequal weights of these three latter components in the training of primary and secondary school teachers.

The Italian authorities in their report appearing in 1980 had welcomed the opportunity to test three different models:

- An autonomous course of studies to be attended only by prospective teachers;
- an integrated course that would leave students the possibility of carrying out certain studies in courses not specifically tailored for future teachers;
- an additional course of one or two years after completion of a general university course of subject studies leading to the *laurea* (or another of the university degrees under discussion), focusing on professional proficiency.

This proposition can be recognised as a guideline concerning the restructuring of the entire sector of teacher preparation, all the more so as the expected reform will usually entail the application of totally new methods in academic training.

*Issues to be resolved*

Within the framework outlined in the preceding paragraphs there remains a series of issues which may be summarised as follows:

a) The choice of the university as the future locus of all teacher training courses has not yet led to consequential decisions about the functions of the *faculties or departments* to which the courses will have to be assigned. The Conference of the Magistero Deans *(Conferenza dei Presidi delle Facoltà di Magistero)* is in favour of proposing their faculty as the appropriate institution for innovative teacher training. This proposal makes sense in so far as the *Magistero* can point to its comparative preparedness, fragmentary though its professionally-oriented component is at present. Above all, the *Magistero* is presented as the appropriate setting for the training of elementary school teachers in the framework of the course on "human and educational sciences" *(scienze umane e dell'educazione)*. The projected course "language and information" *(scienze del linguaggio e dell'informazione)*, on the other hand, offers an example of the professionalised training of secondary school teachers given that the curriculum includes the areas of education, psychology and sociology. Even with regard to the future education of primary school teachers there remains the important question of where to equip students with appropriate knowledge of the *natural sciences*, since the *Magistero* has not incorporated them in its structure.
b) It is, among other factors, the absence of natural sciences in the *Magistero* which raises the issue of *how to co-ordinate subject and educational training*. One also has to consider the present function of the faculties of arts and philosophy as *de facto* teacher training institutions. They are unlikely to surrender this function since this would deprive them of many of their students. The consequences to be drawn from these circumstances seem to point to a *two-track system* consisting of :

- a special track for future primary school teachers with *concurrent* courses in subjects (on a basic academic level), didactics and educational foundations, according to the first model in the background report of 1980;
- a *consecutive* scheme for future secondary school teachers combining the second and third model of the background report, in which professional competence is imparted to the students after completing their subject training courses.

*c)* Any kind of professionalised teacher education must attach primary importance to the implementation of systematised *practicals* to be carried out in schools. As cross-national inquiries show, the efficiency of such practicals, in particular their arrangement in "block sessions", depends on effective *co-operation between the training institution and the school* in which the teacher student is introduced into the practice of his future profession. In a country like Italy, where there is little experience in this field, the realisation of a genuine partnership will be a challenge both to the universities and schools.

*d)* The task of producing qualified teacher trainers has to be tackled with regard not only to the educationists (in the widest meaning of the word, i.e. including those who lecture on teaching methods) in general but also to the tutors of the practicals in particular. Up to now there has not been any satisfactory information available concerning the solution of this problem.

*e)* Even if the projected reform (with its concurrent and consecutive tracks) succeeds in "professionalising" teacher education there will remain *a gap between academic qualification and everyday school practice* which is to be filled by adequate provisions. In this context one might refer to the future of the "proficiency courses" which seem to signal a model worth following up.

**Two outstanding issues**

This appraisal of outstanding issues in Italian teacher preparation leads to two concluding remarks. The first relates to the question of whether the *universities* will be able and willing to accept the challenge posed by the task of radically reforming teacher training. This question is legitimated by the cross-national experience that universities have proved to be institutions with an extremely high degree of immobility with respect to organisational structure, curricula, and, above all, teaching styles.

The second remark is based on the fact that school reforms depend on the commitment of *serving teachers*. In the present context, this statement is especially relevant to the way in which young teachers who have completed "innovative" university programmes are accepted by their older colleagues. There is much evidence that an innovative commitment rapidly oozes away under the pressure of a rigid school climate. This is why innovations in the system of initial teacher training (PRESET) need to be linked with systematised *in-service training* (INSET). In Italy this has apparently been neglected, although legal regulations have laid the formal ground work for appropriate activities (granting of leave, organisation of courses etc.). Apart from the overall need to direct the teachers' attention to innovative developments in the education system, INSET has gained a special relevance with regard to the necessity of retraining teachers for new functions and even new subjects, as exemplified by the decreasing role of classical languages in upper secondary education.

To sum up, we cannot but stress the enormous problems to be solved. The Ministry of Education hopes that the reduction in teacher recruitment may facilitate the introduction of an effective system of in-service training. It remains to be seen how this hope will be realised.

The setting up of regional institutes for educational research, experimentation and in-service training (IRRSAE) is a favourable augury.

## The role of the IRRSAE

The IRRSAE *(Istituti regionali di ricerca, sperimentazione e aggiornamento educativo)* have only just been created as a means of promoting innovations within the education system. Though located in each region, they are directly administered and supervised by the Ministry of Education. However, they enjoy autonomy with regard to budgetary, organisational and curricular matters. At present the Institutes are still engaged in the preliminary stages of organisation and planning, exploring the range of activities to be pursued and in particular what weight to attach to each of the three functions indicated in their title. Our comments are based on too little information for us to make generalisations, but the initial experiences of the two institutes that we were able to visit may serve to inform other OECD countries of the organisation of these Institutes and to illustrate the problems that are being faced.

At Genoa, the governing board has been operating since 1979. Appointed until 1984, that is for five years, it consists of four university teachers (including the president), three teachers delegated by the National Council for Public Instruction, five teachers elected by the members of the Provincial School Councils and three members nominated by the regional authorities. Thirty-five professional staff are to be appointed and this will place Genoa among the medium-size institutes (Lombardy will have 80 and smaller institutes 25 or so staff). Significantly, there were 300 applicants for the posts advertised, all of them school teachers; no university lecturer or assistant applied. Teachers assigned to the Institute will remain attached to their respective schools and have the opportunity of returning to their former posts when their contracts expire. The 35 posts are distributed into four groups as follows :

- 8 to work on documentation and information;
- 8 to work on experimentation;
- 8 to deal with in-service training;
- 11 to serve as "specialists" for :
  - pre-school education (2)
  - elementary education (2)
  - lower secondary education (2)
  - upper secondary education (3)
  - adult education (2).

It is intended that there should be close interaction among all these four groups.

So far no research has been conducted. However, contracts to undertake statistical inquiries and to look at examination procedures have been offered to teams of university teachers. One project within the latter research category is to investigate the middle school final exminations in Liguria. It is intended to undertake studies of the history of schools and an analysis of teaching methods as well as a reappraisal of in-service training methods. Contrary to the statistically-based techniques to be used by the university teams, these projects will be carried out by means of soft qualitative methods such as the evaluation of reports and documents.

Whereas the Institute at Genoa has already determined the overall shape of its programme, the Palermo Institute has not yet determined the exact scope of its activities. The director and vice-director, a university professor and middle school principal, respectively, have part-time appointments; the only full-time appointments so far are those of the secretary


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and a few administrators. The professional staff is to be selected by means of a comparative examination. The Institute will be organised in the same way as in Genoa. A research priority will be in-service training.

Several features of these early developments are noteworthy. The first is the broadly representative character of the governing boards, which promises good co-operation between the universities and the other partners concerned. The second is the fact that all or nearly all of the professional staff will be seconded teachers, in other words, active practitioners. The only reservation here is about their capacity to identify and to design and manage viable and valid research projects. Thirdly, in-service training is to be a high priority. We would hope that the Institutes will encourage as much school-based training as possible while also arranging block courses. We could further hope that they will pay particular attention to the upgrading of primary teachers and to enhancing the pedagogical skills of secondary teachers.

Though in-service training is to be a priority, the IRRSAE also have a marvellous opportunity to bring to bear on Italian education a research and development capacity that is at present lacking. It is particularly urgent to evaluate and to report on the experimental programmes in the schools. To this end each IRRSAE would be well advised to elaborate both a short- and a long-term research programme. Given the presence on their boards of educational specialists from the universities on the one hand, and practitioners from the classroom on the other, they would certainly seem well equipped to do so.

# VI

## ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION IN ITALY

Entry to university in Italy is unusually open compared to most other OECD countries. Any student who has passed the *maturità* has an automatic right to a place. There is no selection based on further examinations or tests set by the university or on interviews designed to discover something about the potential student's motivation. Nor is there selection based on the standard reached in the *maturità* – a pass is all that is required – nor on the views of secondary school teachers of their pupils' potential.

This system of open access has certain advantages. It is simple, straightforward and clear; it avoids complicated and time-consuming systems of selection which may involve both universities and secondary schools in a great deal of extra work. It avoids systems which may overtly or covertly discriminate against certain groups of potential students. For example, a young person who has attended a school with no tradition of sending large numbers of pupils on to university should have a better chance of getting into higher education than in some other countries' education systems. Similarly, a student from a disadvantaged home who may suffer from the fact that his parents have no knowledge or experience of higher education may find it easier to obtain a university place under an open access system where there are no complicated entry regulations and requirements to negotiate.

In the early 1960s only 6.6 per cent of the 20-24 year-old age group were enrolled in higher education. However, in 1969 a new law was introduced establishing 'free access' for all those who had completed the five-year upper-secondary course. Free access meant the student could enrol in any faculty whatever type of course he or she had pursued in the upper secondary school. During the late 1960s and early 1970s there was a great increase in the number of students in universities, which this law helped to facilitate, although there were also other important factors which contributed to the rise in numbers. Total numbers rose from around a quarter of a million in the early 1960s to over three-quarters of a million by the late 1970s. Apparently many of the new clients chose areas of study which did not correspond to the subjects in which they had specialised at upper secondary education level.

Undoubtedly expansion accompanied by open access helped to increase the representation of working-class and female students in Italian universities. In 1960/61 13.9 per cent of first-year enrolments were the children of working-class fathers. By 1973/74 the proportion had risen to 23.3 per cent. In 1964/65 34.2 per cent of university students were women. By 1977/78 this had risen to 40.9 per cent. Nevertheless both these groups are still under-represented at university. This is partly due to the fact that children of poorer families in particular drop out at early stages of secondary education in larger numbers than middle-class students. There is also, it appears, differential access to universities amongst those who do

complete upper secondary education. Some 70 per cent of this category go on to higher education. Whereas 30.2 per cent of those obtaining the *maturità* are working-class, 23.3 per cent of those going to university are working-class. The situation is reversed for those from the professional and managerial group; they constitute 8.9 per cent of those obtaining the *maturità* and 10.7 per cent of university entrants. Moreover, nearly all those with a *maturità* from the classical lyceums go to university, whereas only about half of the 'graduates' of technical institutes do so. Young working-class people are under-represented in the former but over-represented in the latter.

There is nothing unusual about these findings. In virtually every OECD country middle-class and male students are over-represented and working-class and female students under-represented in higher education. Indeed, the Italian position, particularly as far as working-class representation is concerned, is better than in a number of other countries, and as has been shown above represents a substantial improvement over the situation twenty years ago.

Whilst the Italian system of open access clearly has some important advantages, it also has disadvantages, which seem to be widely recognised in Italy. It leads to a poor association between secondary school studies and university studies and severe overcrowding in some faculties. Furthermore, it is associated with one of the highest drop-out rates in OECD countries. According to Cerych, Italy has one of the largest enrolments of students in Western Europe with 29.2 per cent of the relevant age group entering higher education in 1977 (only Denmark was higher with 30.2 per cent), yet the proportion receiving a first-level degree in 1977 (9.4 per cent) was one of the lowest (see Cerych L., "International Comparisons" in Williams G. and Blackstone T., eds, *Response to Adversity*, London, 1983). The high proportion of students dropping out represents severe wastage with respect to investment by the institutions and by the individual student, who fails to complete the course. It seems likely to lead to failed aspirations, disappointment and, in some cases, a sense of failure. The Rector of the University of Bari told us that only about 40 per cent of students who enrol at university end up with a degree. Some of those we interviewed claimed that the drop-out rate tends to be higher amongst students from working-class origins.

We were also told that attendance rates by students are very poor. At the University of Bari, for example, only about 15 to 20 per cent of students attend regularly. Many students attempt to prepare themselves for the examinations without attending the courses that lead up to them. The fact that many students have jobs in order to obtain some kind of income compounds the problem. Of those who do obtain a degree, as many as 90 per cent take longer than the normal period, with only 10 per cent getting their degree without taking extra time.

We agree with those in Italy who think this is an unsatisfactory situation. We would be sorry, however, to see changes which made the universities more efficient but at the same time meant that fewer working- class or female students were able to attend. What is required is a number of reforms which retain and strengthen the best aspects of open access while eliminating its more undesirable ones.

The most fundamental change that is required is a more differentiated degree structure than exists at present. The fact that there are virtually no other courses than those leading to the *laurea* reduces choice for students. It also contributes to the high drop-out rate because the fact that it takes a minimum of four or five years and requires writing a dissertation in most faculties, makes it unsuitable for many students. There is an urgent need to develop two-year diploma courses some of which might be of a vocational nature. We understand that such courses exist but at present only about 2 per cent of all students are enrolled in them.

We suggest that consideration should be given to creating an intermediate diploma

qualification between the *maturità* and the *laurea*, which could be completed in two years' full-time study or three years' part-time study and which would be taken by *all* students. A substantial proportion would go straight into employment after completing the course, the rest would proceed to a shortened *laurea* of, say, three years. The alternative option would be for some students to take the diploma and for others to go straight on to the current longer *laurea* courses without taking the diploma first. This has the disadvantage that many students may not be clear, before they have started, whether they can sustain a four- or five-year university course. Others will be pushed into opting for the *laurea* on status grounds, whether it is suitable for them or not. As a consequence there may still be a substantial number of students dropping out without any qualification at all. The advantage of starting off everyone on a short diploma course should greatly reduce wastage and prevent the diploma remaining a low prestige course for which few students will opt.

The second reform that would appear desirable is a better relationship between university and secondary school education. First, as Visalberghi has argued, "the admission to every type of university course should be free but only if it is consistent with the subjects studied and completed at high school" (Visalberghi in Postlethwaite N, and Husén T., *International Encyclopaedia of Education*, forthcoming). He goes on to say "it is difficult to tolerate the present situation, probably unique in the world, allowing each high school graduate to be admitted to every type of university study". This means that thought must be given to specifying certain subject requirements in the secondary schools for entry to particular university faculties. Five years specialising in the classics at secondary school may not, for example, seem a very sensible basis for studying medicine at university. Second, there should be more contacts between schools and universities in order to try and narrow the gap between the methods and content of school studies and those at university. One of the keys to this might be the reform of the *maturità*.

The third change that is required is a better structured system of teaching and learning in the universities. Ways need to be found to ensure better attendance and to improve the quality of teaching and academic support given to students. Regular annual examinations which are closely related to the courses on offer would help. The reduction in the expansion of the universities in recent years, which seems likely to continue, provides an invaluable opportunity to think more about qualitative changes of this kind than has been possible in the past.

Finally, there is a need to improve and expand systems of financial support for students. At present, although all students are entitled to highly subsidised meals, and some are able to obtain cheap university housing, there is no universal system of grants or loans. Some scholarships are available for poor students so that their fees are paid and grants are provided for the purchase of books. We recommend that consideration should be given to the introduction of a system of means-tested grants and loans so that students from poor families would have to rely less on obtaining jobs to support themselves whilst at university. As a result they may be both put off starting a course and more likely to drop out. Greater financial security ought to provide a greater incentive to the completion of higher education. We recognise that any substantial expansion in financial aid for students could entail considerable expenditure. We are conscious too of the other demands for additional expenditure, and of the difficulty in providing extra resources for education in the present economic climate. It may well be that the issue of financial aid should be considered in the context of how to make the best use of whatever resources are available for higher education.



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# VII

## PLANNING, POLICY ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH

Any consideration of policy issues leading to decisions to commit substantial resources over periods of years must in turn give rise to the question of how these issues are evaluated and how information relevant for decision-making purposes is made available. We feel that this issue has not been given sufficient consideration in Italy.

There is little evidence of any comprehensive formal planning or policy analysis undertaken within the Italian education system. Instead, it might be described as being characterised by 'piecemeal' or specific analyses and actions which, while they may be appropriate or valid in themselves, do not necessarily go to produce a coherent overall pattern of activity. An example from within the education system might be the contrast between the single straightforward three-year course of study at the *scuola media* (lower secondary level) and the jump to the complex array of courses on offer at upper secondary school level. Yet, as demonstrated in Chapters II and III, there appears to be little or no contact between the two categories of schools, and little opportunity for pupils in the *scuola media* to become aware of, or be prepared for, the different educational world ahead of them. Another example might be the apparent imbalance between the current and capital expenditures at primary level, where the progressive improvements in the number of teachers has meant a pupil/teacher ratio of about 16:1, but at the same time the shortages in the availability of school buildings means that some children must still attend two-shift schools (up to 10 per cent of pupils in the South). A further illustration might be the absence of any clear framework for co-ordinating the activities of those upper secondary schools offering short-cycle technical courses (vocational institutes) with the programmes of the regional authorities in the field of technical training. An addition to the list would be the general absence of cost data on the various levels and types of courses which would be required for any efforts at assessing the cost-effectiveness of alternative activities, as well as the limited data on the quality, relevance or other features of the outputs from the courses themselves at all levels of the system.

Against this view it might be contended that the Italian education system has shown itself to be highly successful in dealing with the many diverse demands placed upon it over the past two decades. It has carried through a massive expansion drive which has resulted in the provision of eight years' schooling for all and has also opened up a wide range of other opportunities at all levels from kindergarten to university. At the same time that this huge expansion in numerical terms was taking place, the system was also able to develop new institutions and new courses to meet the changing demands of society and of the labour market. The system has also managed to cope with the social tensions and conflicts emerging

in such a period of unusual change with a much greater degree of success than many would have thought possible or dared hope for some years ago.

Arising from this latter concern with the need to cope with social tensions, it might be contended that a formal system of planning and policy analysis might have been a disadvantage rather than a help. Such a system, as usually understood, would be expected to encompass the following procedures :

*a)* a decision-making procedure to determine the objectives, results or outputs to be sought from any activity;

*b)* an evaluation procedure for assessing and comparing the various ways in which desired results might be achieved;

*c)* an information-gathering and processing procedure to collect relevant data on the inputs required, their costs, and the performance associated with their use;

*d)* a review procedure:

  *i)* to establish the extent to which agreed projects have been implemented and

  *ii)* to examine whether any revision of activities is called for as a result either of changes in external circumstances or of new developments within the education system itself.

The operation of such a system in a democracy implies that a substantial volume of information would become widely available, and in particular would make clear the basis on which the selected options or courses of action had been made. For programmes which last over many years, as is usually the case with education, this also entails indicating the way in which resources are expected to be used in the years ahead. But such clarification also reveals those options which were not chosen, or shows which projects will be implemented later rather than earlier, and hence provides a ready-made basis for the criticism of those who favour the rejected or delayed activities.

The alternative approach to planning and policy analysis derives from models of political behaviour. Here the decision-making process is seen as producing acceptable solutions or courses of action for groups which contain within them wide ranges of preferences and varying priorities. In this approach to the management of conflict, the decision-making process is focused not on the production of coherent and comprehensive sets of objectives, but rather on identifying those actions which minimise the risk of social disruption or grievance and which find positive support of varying strength from the largest number of people affected. In this approach, information- gathering and processing is an activity which plays an important role in helping to shape the discussions and negotiations leading to the emergence of solutions, but it is done on a partial or selective basis, with the varying parties or interest groups revealing only that information which is judged as helpful to their case, and concealing information that might weaken their negotiating position. In short, information becomes a valuable commodity not to be given freely to all, but to be treated as an integral part of the bargaining process which leads to the emergence of democratically acceptable outcomes.

There would be little dispute on the need to take this political-type model of conflict management into account in the actual operation of any democratic planning system. And in periods of rapid change or development this may well prove the more important element in the system, since the rapidity of change on the one hand, and the increasing availability of extra resources through growth on the other hand, lend less urgency and relevance to the search for optimality in resource use.

This may well have been the situation in Italy in the past. However, the more recent trends and projections for the future suggest that a greater emphasis on optimisation



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procedures will be called for in the coming years. The falling numbers of pupils at almost all levels of the system implies a shift in emphasis from quantitative to qualitative priorities, while the stringent financial climate points to a greater need for achieving value for money in educational as in other spending areas. It may be relevant therefore to develop some illustrations of possible areas in which a more 'transparent' system of planning might help progress in this direction.

### School buildings

One such area, to which we have already referred in Chapter II, could be the provision of school buildings. As in most other countries there is considerable variation in the standard of school buildings in Italy. In our visits we were able to observe for ourselves this variety. In the worst cases we saw that classrooms were overcrowded, the buildings were old and not easily adapted to modern teaching methods, the internal and external décor was poor, giving the appearance of inadequate maintenance and the general physical environment did not seem very conducive to high morale on the part of the pupils or teachers. The best buildings, on the other hand, were light, spacious, well designed and equipped. Generalisations are risky on the basis of small samples. However, the best buildings appeared as good as any to be found in other OECD countries, but the worst were of a standard that we suspect would not be tolerated in some other countries. The question then becomes how to raise the standards of the poorest buildings to those of the best.

We have noted that the number of children per classroom has been falling. Demographic change should aid this process further. Moreover, the decline in the birth rate should mean that the pressures of the past to provide sufficient "rooves over heads" should be alleviated. This should make it easier to concentrate in the future on qualitative improvement either by replacing inadequate buildings altogether or by rehabilitating and extending others where this is possible. We noted that nearly a third of all primary schools were built before 1945 and between a quarter and a fifth of all secondary schools were built before this date. Whilst the age of a school building is not necessarily an indication of its quality, it seems likely that a substantial proportion of these older buildings (particularly those built before 1920) will be inadequate.

There will also be pressures as a result of the upper secondary school reform. A major programme of capital development seems likely to be needed if the reform is to be a success. Many of the existing specialised upper secondary schools lack the facilities that will be required to create non-specialised comprehensive schools catering for the needs of all children.

So far we have identified three priorities : the improvement of sub-standard buildings (which, we suspect, may be particularly numerous at the middle school stage); the replacement or improvement of pre-war buildings (concentrated at the elementary school stage); a capital programme to accompany the reform of upper secondary education. There may well be other priorities. We are, however, somewhat concerned that the current system of planning the development of school buildings may make the proper identification of *educational* priorities difficult.

The fact that building programmes are the responsibility of local authorities which have no other educational remits, the fact that the representation of educational interest on local authority bodies to plan school building programmes is small and heavily outweighed by other interests, and the lack of any central government identification or planning of capital needs all seem to us to be matters that require some consideration. Are there, for example, adequate


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financial inducements to local authorities receiving a block grant for all expenditure to spend money on school buildings once they have fulfilled their basic obligation to provide rooves over heads? Are the mechanisms adequate for bringing the worst buildings closer to the standards of the best? Are there suitable and effective financial mechanisms for equalising the standards of buildings between richer and poorer regions of the country? Can anything be done to improve the maintenance of school buildings, particularly in a context where those responsible for using the buildings (notably head teachers) are not represented on the local authorities who are responsible for maintaining them?

There is clearly some frustration on the part of head teachers that they are not consulted about needs or priorities. Teachers everywhere complain about the buildings in which they work and we accept that their complaints may not always be justified and their expectations may sometimes be unrealistically high. However, we have some sympathy with the group of Italian heads who told us their schools were monuments of the 19th and even the 18th centuries (and they were unrestored monuments at that). We recommend that consideration should be given to improving the links between the local authorities and the education system at various levels in planning the capital programme for schools.

We are aware that the division of functions as between State and regions is settled by law. However, the development of a more formal and visible set of planning procedures might be a valuable aid to decision-making. It should be feasible, for example, to work out standards of accommodation and other facilities and establish the extent to which these are met in the various regions. Programmes for future development could then be prepared in the light of relative needs for each region. An obvious field for such co-ordination would be the extensive adaptation of buildings entailed by the upper secondary reform.

The setting of common standards would in turn require that some programme had been agreed for other relevant aspects such as the age groups to be accommodated, the nature of the curriculum to be offered, the staffing levels to be achieved and so forth, and the formulation of standards and targets in these areas would point up the need in turn for the more systematic articulation of objectives under these headings.

**Equipment**

Just as there is variety in the quality of buildings, so is there considerable variety in how well schools are equipped in any education system. There are, however, clearly some serious problems in the standards of equipment in Italian schools which may impede the development of successful teaching. We have identified a number of areas which we believe may need consideration. These include laboratory provision, libraries, the provision of textbooks, specialised facilities for the teaching of art and music, computers, and sports facilities. We fully recognise that resources are scarce but wonder whether the relatively generous provision of teachers in Italy may be at the expense of some of these basic facilities that are more fully provided in a number of other OECD countries. We have noted that the Italian authorities recognise some of these deficiencies. They are concerned, for example, with the fact that sports facilities are available in only half the secondary schools and that laboratories are only available in one secondary school in three.

The middle schools appeared to us to be particularly poorly equipped. The almost total lack of science laboratories makes the provision of an adequate grounding in science subjects difficult. At the secondary stage the vocational schools seemed to be on average better equipped than other institutions. Some of the technical schools also appeared to have a wide variety of equipment. The grammar schools *(licei)* that we visited, perhaps unsurprisingly,

were less well equipped. There appeared, however, to be little scope for a pupil, with a practical or artistic bent, to develop such skills further in some of these schools. Whilst computing facilities appear to be available in a few schools, there is apparently no national programme to provide them everywhere. We wonder whether a field as important as information technology can be left to *ad hoc* local initiative.

It is difficult to tell how far the school libraries we saw were representative. In several cases, however, the books appeared to be kept in locked cupboards with little attempt to display them attractively and thereby encourage children to read. In some institutions the books appeared old and tatty and in need of replacement with newer publications, which might entice those pupils who do not automatically turn to books for information or pleasure.

Finally, the cost of providing textbooks has to be borne by pupils in the upper secondary schools. For higher income families this presumably presents few problems. But those who are less well off, particularly those with more than one child at this stage of education, seem likely to face difficulties in purchasing all the necessary books. In spite of the fact that some help is provided for poor parents, we wonder whether this is enough and whether there is not a danger that some working-class young people may be discouraged from staying on at school as a result. If we are right that the need to purchase books has a disincentive effect on continuing education for some social groups, we suggest that ways should be explored to reduce, if not remove, this effect.

**Ancillary staff**

We were struck by the fact that most schools appear to have fairly generous administrative and secretarial support. This means that head teachers can concentrate on the crucial task of providing educational leadership in curriculum development and teaching methods, on staff development and on relationships with parents and pupils. As such it is to be welcomed.

We were, however, equally struck by the lack of specialised ancillary staff in some other areas. There seemed to be few school librarians, few laboratory technicians, and few media resources officers looking after television equipment, video and film equipment, overhead projectors and other teaching aids of this kind. In middle and secondary schools especially, specialised support staff of this kind can greatly help teachers in their work. In a context where there is some underemployment of teachers, we wonder whether there is scope for some retraining and redeployment of surplus staff in some of the jobs we have described. It may not be in the best interests of the education system to concentrate nearly all staff resources on a relatively undifferentiated teaching profession. If new categories of ancillary workers cannot be developed because of trade union opposition or for other reasons, we suggest that consideration might be given to providing special and in-service training for some teachers to perform these roles. They would then need to be released from part of their required teaching hours to undertake this work.

There is one other area where there might be scope for the appointment of specialised staff. Few teachers have enough time to follow up problems of truancy and non-attendance. Even if they had the time they might not be the best people to do this, since, just because they are teachers, parents or pupils may feel unable to express their fears and difficulties about attending school. It might therefore be desirable to appoint Educational Welfare Staff, whose remit would be to follow up poor attenders and those who have dropped out of school altogether. They would be responsible for encouraging them to go to school and for trying to



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resolve any particular problems which may account for non-attendance and dropping out. Such staff would require some basic social work training.

**Need for evaluation**

In addition to the aspects of planning and policy analysis dealt with above, there are of course important questions concerning the effectiveness and relevance of the various educational programmes themselves and the manner in which new developments and innovations are incorporated into the education system.

Hitherto there appears to have been little in the form of systematic evaluation of the content and quality of curricula. Neither does there appear to have been any systematic procedure for transmitting the findings of new experiments on research to schools in general. Recently, however, steps have been taken to deal with these aspects of educational needs. In Chapter V we have already referred to the potentially key role of the IRRSAE in research and development. We wonder whether inspectors might not also play a vital role.

The inspectorate within the Ministry of Education does not play a monitoring role. What is the purpose, however, of the recent creation of teams of inspectors in each of the regions? We were given to understand that they will be relatively few in number – for example, there are to be only twenty five for the whole of Sicily – and that they will act primarily as advisors. No doubt they will also be used from time to time to inspect schools or teachers about which there have been complaints. But will they not also monitor the progress of structural, curricular and pedagogical innovations in the schools? This would seem to be a particularly desirable function at a time when a major reform of upper secondary education is in the offing and when the IRRSAE are just starting their work. Is there any intention, we wonder, to arrange for regular tripartite exchanges among the national inspectors, the regional inspectors and representatives of the IRRSAE?

**Conclusion**

The Italian system has been undergoing rapid change and has enjoyed remarkable development in the period since the last OECD review. It has now entered into a phase marked by many different characteristics which will call for new directions. The demographic trend will affect enrolment rates at all levels and will produce shifts in the relative priorities at each level. At the same time, the financial pressures resulting from the severity of the general economic recession will intensify the need to ensure that the best educational results are obtained from the resources available to the system.

While the adoption of more systematic research, planning and policy analysis procedures would not of themselves resolve these new problems, they could make an invaluable contribution. It is our view that the absence of such procedures will render the task of the authorities much more difficult and burdensome. The education system, no less than other sectors of society, must show itself capable of adapting to the changing environment. What better demonstration could there be of this than to be in the vanguard in managing innovation and constructive development?



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## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. In 1969: 1 560 220 children ; in 1980: 1 840 555.
2. The situation is somewhat complicated by political considerations. In Genoa, for example, the city authorities have further developed, alongside the old private and Catholic schools, *scuole dell'infanzia* (Infant schools), so called to distinguish them from the *scuola materna* of which the political left disapproves.
3. 1960: 40.3 per cent in the South, 56.6 per cent in the North. 1980: 73.1 per cent in the South, 81.4 per cent in the North.
4. Figure taken from Table 44 of the background report. In the body of the text, on p. 104, the figure of 15 per cent is mentioned, but according to the table this refers to pre-primary schools. There appears to be a discrepancy here.
5. The expression *scuola media unica* (unified middle as coined at the time of the Bottai reform in 1940, which introduced unified first-year studies at the *ginnasi*, the technical institutes and the *istituti magistrali* (primary teacher training colleges). Vocationally oriented secondary schools, which represented more than one half of the total enrolment, remained outside this unification.
6. 55 teachers for 370 pupils (with, in addition, 5 teachers responsible for the integration of handicapped children (see last section in this chapter).
7. In Palermo we saw what was certainly the extreme case of middle schools installed in residential buildings rented for the purpose by the municipality. As the law prohibits a school from having more than 24 classes, it sometimes happens that two middle schools are installed in the same building but on alternate floors: school A on the ground and second floors ; school B on the first and third, so that the attendant disadvantages are equitably shared.
8. These institutes enjoy greater autonomy over budgets ; in particular, they are responsible for management of the staff allocated to them by the state.
9. See, in particular, "Integration of Handicapped Children in Italy", in *The Education of the Handicapped Adolescent: Integration in the School*, OECD/CERI, Paris, 1981.


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*Part Two*

# RECORD OF THE REVIEW MEETING

**Paris, 25th November 1983**

# INTRODUCTION

In his opening remarks the Chairman, *Mr. Gérard,* (Canada) emphasized the fact that the Italian education system was of special interest to OECD countries at this particular point in time.

*Mr. O'Donoghue,* speaking on behalf of the examiners, said they had all been impressed by the progress achieved in Italy since the last review of the education system in 1969. He felt that his team's report which, with a view to providing constructive criticism, had concentated more on the shortcomings of the system than on its many positive aspects, would be of use not only to the Italian authorities but also to the Delegations of other Member countries.

*Mr. Amalfitano, Under-Secretary of State attached to the Ministry of Education and Head of the Italian Delegation,* said that education in Italy was currently going through a period of transition, moving from a phase of expansion to one of consolidation, from quantitative growth to qualitative improvement: this was a period of rationalisation. There had been much discussion about the reform of the curricula for primary and lower secondary education, and the revision of the criteria governing the organisation of education; at this moment, consultations were being held on the details of the proposed reform of upper secondary education. It was essential that legislation on education should be properly co-ordinated since this was the only way of achieving a truly effective overall policy.

The watchwords, therefore, were "rationalisation" and "quality". The drop in enrolment due to the declining birthrate held out the possibility of a useful surplus of teachers: this opportunity needed to be seized, and priority given to improving the proficiency of the teaching staff, particularly by means of in-service training. The economic crisis was obliging the country to take a hard look at its education system: if the aim of quality was to be attained, then emphasis needed to be placed on intelligence and creative potential. Modern-day society demanded quality and a high degree of professionalism on the part of teachers.

The present difficulties were also due to the fact that Italy was switching from a restricted to a comprehensive approach to education. There was renewed interest in continuing education, in those outside the system, those who had received no education as well as for the "new illiterates" who were unable to master the basic skills that were so necessary for anyone living in contemporary society.

Italy had adopted as its priorities innovation, experimentation and productivity. As far as innovation was concerned, the authorities were concentrating their efforts on the quality of the teaching/learning process; the legislation regarding handicapped persons had already produced some significant results and many individuals relegated to the fringe of society had been reintegrated into the mainstream. As far as experimentation was concerned, this was a permanent and useful means of meeting the need for assessment and rational planning, but it always involved the risk of wasted effort. Experimentation was particularly helpful when drafting educational legislation or setting standards. It could be said to be more useful from the structural rather than the methodological standpoint. As far as productivity was

concerned, it was by checking and monitoring the educational process that the education authorities were able to know how the system was performing and where it was going.

Although this present phase in educational policy-making gave no grounds for complacency, the certainty that education was once again considered as a key aspect of the country's overall policy was nonetheless encouraging. Italy had to face the challenge of the future and gear its educational aims to the need to develop high technology industries; similarly, it needed to promote the development of a democratic culture for all. In this way a resolute educational policy would help the country through a difficult phase in terms of its identity and its traditional culture.

# I

## POLICIES, PLANNING AND RESOURCES

Question 1

*Since the Second World War the Italian education system has undergone fundamental structural reforms and remarkable quantitative expansion especially since the watershed of 1968 but, arguably, curricular and pedagogical reforms have lagged behind. Are further structural reforms proposed or is the intention now to concentrate on qualitative improvement of the education system? What are the authorities' priorities for the period up to the year 2000?*

Question 2

*The management of education in Italy is divided between central government and regional authorities. Results are variable and sometimes disappointing. The declared policy is to decentralise decision-making and management of the education system to the regional level and to give more autonomy to the schools. By what specific measures and through what stages is it proposed to implement this policy? How is the future role of central government envisaged and in what ways will the performance of the regional authorities be monitored?*

Question 3

*Local authority responsibility for the provision of buildings and their maintenance with little participation in and no control of the decision-making process by the education authorities may give rise to difficulties in establishing building priorities. How, for example, will the Ministry ensure implementation of the large building programme that will be required when the secondary school reform is introduced?*

Question 4

*Educational provision in Italy has been affected by the economic recession since about 1975 and is now experiencing the impact of falling rolls. How are the authorities coping with this period of zero growth? Do they have any plans to redeploy resources in face of falling rolls, for example, by allocating special resources to the needs of disadvantaged children and young people or by equalising basic school resources, e.g. school libraries, or by equalising opportunities between regions or replacing old buildings?*

Question 5

*What evidence is there that the effectiveness of the education system is related to the volume of resources expended, given that Italy devotes no less than 7.3 per cent of its GNP to education? Against the current background in OECD countries of a demand for greater accountability, are any measures being taken to improve the machinery for evaluating the performance of the education system? Are changes foreseen in the role of the central inspectorate and what are the reasons for establishing inspectorates at the regional level?*

Question 6

*The establishment of the IRRSAE has been made in recognition of the need to strengthen the research and development capacity of the education system at the regional level. How is it proposed to strengthen that capacity at the national level and what machinery will be used to improve collaboration between the Ministry of Education, the IRRSAE and the educational research community in the universities? How will the effectiveness of the individual IRRSAE be monitored and how will the findings from the multitude of experimental projects under way, such as the value of team teaching, be translated into general practice?*

*Mr. O'Donoghue* pointed out that the first set of questions dealt with the long term outlook and the wider issues. Their purpose was to establish, first, in what direction the system was going to develop and, second, how the various changes that were planned could be brought about. The examiners were anxious that a distinction should be made between the aspirations of the authorities and what would be feasible in practice. Clearly the system had to contend with a number of pressures that were likely to have as much influence as the policy planned by the authorities. These were not exclusively economic pressures since there were also the attitudes of the different groups directly responsible for education to be considered, in other words the teachers themselves as well as the various local government bodies. Nor could the changing attitudes of employers and pupils with regard to the aims of the system be overlooked. In addition, social change could create special requirements, a good example of this being the need for the integration of women.

The examiners had concluded that a more clearly defined and more coherent system for analysing, monitoring and formulating educational policy would probably be desirable in the future, given that the effects of falling rolls and economic constraints would require that more efficient use be made of resources. Italy now possessed the basic infrastructure to accommodate all children of compulsory school age; as Mr. Amalfitano had stated, quality was now the aim that had to be pursued. Was it not also necessary to review the division of functions and responsibilities between central, regional and local authorities? At a time of change and economic stringency and when new forms of democracy were also beginning to emerge, the authorities responsible for education would probably be well advised to take the initiative themselves rather than wait until they had to respond to other people's initiatives.

*Mr. Martinez* referred to the statement already made by the Under-Secretary of State that education in Italy was currently going through a transitional phase. The foundations for change had been laid but much remained to be done. A unified middle school had been created; nursery schools now existed throughout the country; school curricula had been redesigned; nonetheless, the reform of the educational process was not yet complete.

As regards management, there had been reform in two areas. First, decentralisation: since 1970, regional authorities with legislative powers had been set up. Second, at the local level the creation of committees, on which parents, pupils and teachers were represented, encouraged participation. These quite recent initiatives were an essential part of the overall reform of the education system.

There were two major issues: that of the structural reorganisation of the system and that of improving the educational "product". The ultimate aim of every reform was quality.

As regards structure, the priority was secondary education, the last link in the chain of reforms. The task was a difficult one, but it was essential to complete the process which would make education a means to a balanced society operating in harmony with industry and the world of work in general. This would require greater administrative flexibility: for example, at the moment educational guidance was the responsibility of central government whereas vocational guidance was the responsibility of the regions. Steps would need to be taken to ensure proper co-ordination in this area. From a general standpoint, the setting up of the IRRSAE should help greatly in making management structures more flexible, particularly through the new inspectorate which would serve as a link between the school, the regional authorities and the central authorities.

As regards improving the quality of the educational process, this was essential in the present situation. There had been an enormous increase in the number of teachers over the past twenty years. Now, with the system in the process of being overhauled, it would be possible to switch from a traditional, rigid form of education to one based on constant experimentation. This would mean that teachers would need to be better qualified and capable of coping with the situation; that elementary school teachers should have a better academic background – a university education – and that secondary school teachers should be given in-service training. It would mean that teaching would have to abandon its traditional methods and become multidisciplinary. Such were the priorities for the coming years but it would all depend on the amount of energy that everyone would be willing to devote to achieving them.

*Mr. Visalberghi* said there were a number of additional points to be made. In Italy, there was virtually no tradition of educational research. The setting up of the IRRSAE, was intended to remedy this major defect. There were in addition two institutions of a national character: the Library of Documentation on Education at Florence and the European Education Centre at Frascati. Furthermore, the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), had carried out a number of appraisals in conjunction with the Italian authorities and an attempt was being made at the moment to set up machinery for objective evaluation and comparison not only of pupil performance but also of the effectiveness of in-service training programmes. Over the long term it was hoped that the IRRSAE would be able jointly to operate a nationwide system of educational assessment.

Unfortunately, the operation of these IRRSAE over the past five years had proved extremely difficult because the complex provisions of Italian law prevented the selection and appointment of staff when needed. Recently, however, the Conference of IRRSAE Presidents had begun to hold meetings, under the permanent chairmanship of the Minister himself. Currently they were discussing the setting up throughout the country of special bodies to represent teachers. It was proposed that these bodies should operate at an intermediate level between the local authorities and the regional authorities and in conjunction with the IRRSAE and local officials of the Ministry. This type of scheme, designed to facilitate participation of the lower echelons and more harmonious co-operation between the different levels of authority, was difficult to implement due to the inflexibility of the legislation.

However, this was part of the Ministry's policy and, in Mr. Visalberghi's view, the approach should be persevered with.

Replying to the questions regarding resource allocation, *Mr. Avveduto* said that Italy was one of the countries that had maintained the same real level of expenditure on education despite zero growth. They did not have the means to measure the return on this investment but some useful indications were provided by the figures published by the National Statistical Institute. By and large, the labour force was becoming increasingly better qualified: for example, in Italy in 1981, compared with 1971, there were substantially more *laureati* or graduates who had completed four years of higher education; over the same period the illiteracy rate had fallen from 5.2 to 2.5 per cent. In Mr. Avveduto's view, it would seem that the system was achieving results.

*The Delegate for Spain* asked for some additional information about the role of inspectors and the setting up of the new inspectorate.

*Mr. Visalberghi* explained that until recently there had been only one central inspectorate which did not deal with all schools. Over the past two years a new body of inspectors had been recruited at regional level and they would work in conjunction with the IRRSAE. Obviously other machinery for objective assessment would need to be set up, but this brand new service would have an important role to play in the future.

*The Delegate for the United States* congratulated the Italian authorities on their concern for quality. She asked the Italian Delegation to explain how the statistics on illiterates had been obtained.

*The Finnish Delegate* asked for further information on the advisory bodies that seemed to exist at all levels of the Italian education system. Were there also specialist bodies dealing with specific areas? Admittedly, consultation and participation were thoroughly valid principles, but were all these committees really useful; did they really have an influence on the shaping of policy?

*The Representative for Norway* asked the Italian Delegation about its government's policy as regards the linkage between the education system and the economy. Since the economies of the advanced countries were currently unable to absorb between 20 and 50 per cent of the annual output of school leavers seeking their first job, why had the education system to adapt to the needs of the economy? In Norway, the needs of the economy were not considered a valid basis for overall education policy. Second, in Norway, it had been found that local authorities were representative bodies that knew how to organise themselves, make their wishes known and exert pressure on the system. By contrast, parent groups were unduly dominated by one type of person, in other words well-to-do people, usually with a high standard of education, lots of leisure and children who did well at school. This was why decentralisation in Norway had been focused on the local authorities.

*Mr. Gass,(OECD Secretariat),* stated that creativity and the entrepreneurial spirit were what created jobs. Education should aim to cultivate these qualities among young people and provide them with the resources that they would need in life. Gearing education to the economy therefore meant more than merely adapting it to a measurable output of goods and services.

*The Delegate for Ireland* thought that it was not a good thing that decisions could be taken and the responsibility for funding them left to others. What provisions were there in Italy to prevent central, regional or local authorities from imposing on one another policies for which they did not have financial responsibility?

*The Delegate for Germany* asked for more details about the role of the different levels of government. Would the division of responsibilities be clear, particularly with respect to the planning and development of curricula? Who would decide how funds would be allocated? In

addition, how was responsibility for vocational training shared between the Ministries of Education and Labour?

*The French Representative* asked what role was envisaged for the social partners in this decentralisation. Would the involvement of local authorities continue to be confined to the funding aspect or would they be able to play a part in the day-to-day running of schools? To what extent would parents, pupils or other groups be involved?

*The Delegate for Yugoslavia* asked what the consequence of decentralisation would be for minorities.

*Mr. Martinez*, replying to the questions on decentralisation, pointed out that schools were national and state institutions. However, the Constitution provided for a large measure of local autonomy. Central government was responsible primarily for the school system as a whole, for its staffing and for the definition and programming of courses of study. The regions, on the other hand, were responsible for management at the local level, the infrastructure and supporting educational activities, i.e. financial support, social assistance, school medical services, transport, buildings and also vocational training for those who left school at about sixteen. Central government and the regions had sole responsibility in their respective areas. Central government collected the taxes and divided the revenue amongst the regions which, in turn, made allocations to the various items in their budget, including education. The regions enjoyed legislative power in respect of matters that were within their competence.

Some form of meaningful policy co-ordination between the regions needed to be established since central government had no direct administrative powers with regard to regional matters. Moreover, since the regions had greater discretionary power in financial matters, they were far more wealthy than central government with its fixed items of expenditure. Consequently, it was essential to set up joint bodies involving both central and regional government. With regard to vocational training, for example, links had to be established, via say a central committee, between central government, the ministries and the regional authorities. There were numerous plans for new structures but it was proving difficult to put these into effect because of the innumerable legal and administrative obstacles. The administrative involvement of central government created a problem since it was organised along very bureaucratic lines in accordance with the Constitution. Similarly, relations between "districts" and local authorities in the area of administration were not always easy since there was competition between them. At the regional government level, where the social partners could become involved, there were occasionally conflicts between the central and local authorities, particularly in cases where the regional government was of a different political persuasion. This meant establishing a dialogue and maintaining constant contact.

In reply to the questions regarding participation, *Mr. Martinez* said that the school had to reconcile the interests of parents, families and the heritage of the past. There were a number of bodies that provided the means of participation. There were the boards that managed the schools, decided on the budget and equipment, and enjoyed a large measure of autonomy. At the district level, there were the provincial school boards on which sat representatives of the teaching staff. Participation of parents, teachers and pupils was, of course, substantial at the upper secondary level. At this stage in the education process links had to be established with the world of work. Italy had now reached the point where it could aim at establishing a balance between education and working life so as to eliminate social stratifications. A flexible system needed to be created that would succeed in forging a link between the process of education and the constantly changing world of work. Clearly, practical training would be of paramount importance in this respect.

Replying to the Norwegian Representative's questions, *Mr. Visalberghi* said that, on the

one hand, a large number of young Italians were actually working although they were registered as unemployed. There were only two or three hundred thousand people who were really out of work. Secondly, it was certainly not the schools' role merely to prepare a child for a particular job. Its task was to stimulate a child's intelligence, its analytical powers and its faculties of communication. Knowledge of new technologies was also important; at the moment there were plans for a compulsory introductory course on computers at the upper secondary level. There was not necessarily any automatic link between the work of the school and economic output, but if Italy wanted to retain its place as the world's seventh industrial power and not find itself relegated to the rank of a Third World country, it would need to rely on education and up-to-date vocational training.

Italy had an outline law for vocational education precisely defining the responsibilities of the regions and central government. Vocational training syllabuses had to reflect the economic needs of each region. For the sake of flexibility and uniformity, each "module" spanned six months and no course could comprise more than four "modules". According to *Mr. Visalberghi* this system was not yet operating very satisfactorily but he hoped soon to be able to announce some progress.

As far as minorities were concerned, Mr. Visalberghi pointed out that in Italy these were of two kinds. The traditional linguistic minorities were well catered for and their children could expect to be educated in their mother tongue. With regard to the new minorities, mostly immigrant workers, experiments were being carried out in order to find solutions. In many cases it was the regional authorities that dealt with this and currently the Lombardy region and the city of Milan were setting up special programmes. Italy was in advance of most countries as regards the treatment of minorities and had organised several international conferences on this subject, notably one held at Villa Falconieri.

On the question of illiteracy, *Mr. Avveduto* said that the statistics quoted concerned the entire population aged six and over and were taken from the 1981 national census. The situation on the whole was fairly healthy since the highest illiteracy levels were amongst the older age groups, whereas most children aged 14 or under had mastered the basic skills. He admitted that, like the United States, his country was likely to be faced with the problem of the "new illiterates", to which the Under-Secretary of State had referred earlier. These people would not adjust easily to the new technologies.

*The Under-Secretary of State, Mr. Amalfitano,* wished to underline a number of important points. First with reference to schools, the experiment with collegial bodies needed to be reassessed because participation in these had declined after an initial period of euphoria. From the standpoint of the educational process, participation was a means of promoting creativity. University faculties, for example, were planning to give students the opportunity to elect their own representatives. As for the relations between central government and the regions, *Mr. Martinez* had already made the point that decentralisation was a question of co-participation, but this depended on the morphology of the country. With respect to the right to education, *Mr. Amalfitano* acknowledged that his country did not yet have an outline law and that any regional initiative without such a law inevitably raised problems. A way had to be found of overcoming the present haphazard division of powers between the different levels of authority.

As regards creativity, it was a question of the relationship between the economy and education. Did Italy wish to be an advanced country or a country beset by all kinds of difficulties? Mr. Amalfitano considered that development was synonymous with change and that it was the dynamics of the school which should lead to creativity by giving children the opportunity of switching direction, of progressing through life with perhaps frequent changes of job. As regards the relationship with out-of-school education, the school itself should be

considered as a source of information and training by means of the selection of information. The use of computers in schools, for example, meant a new medium of exchange, a new means of expression and participation. Lastly, if the intention was that Italy should cease being an essentially protective society and become a society that promoted the quality of life, it needed to be appropriately equipped and this was a task for the schools. It was with the help of the schools that creativity and change would be achieved and, thereby, quality of life and development.

# II

## PRIMARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL

Question 7

*Do the Italian authorities intend to lower to five the age for beginning compulsory schooling? If so, will this additional year remain incorporated in pre-primary schooling, or will it be used for primary education? More broadly speaking, is the motivation for such a reform connected with the movement which advocates that the gradual acquisition of cognitive learning should begin as early as possible?*

Question 8

*Will the primary school reform which is under consideration result in a prolongation of the ordinary period of compulsory schooling? If so, will this extended framework bring "integrative activities" within a coherent system of teaching? In that case, what will become of* doposcuola *(extra-curricular) activities?*

Question 9

*The existing gulf between primary and middle school is frequently deplored and the persistence (and even increasing number) of repeats on arrival at middle school is a matter for concern. Is it intended to rely solely on the remodelling of primary school curricula to improve this situation? To what extent are transitional difficulties due to the deeply-rooted attitudes of teachers, and in that case how can these attitudes be changed?*

Question 10

*Is there any plan to develop technical aids to more personalised teaching, e.g. documentation centres, school libraries? In the allocation of administrative responsibilities, who would be in charge of them, the State, or local authorities? Might some of the teaching posts which are becoming superfluous be used for the purpose?*

Question 11

*The determination to integrate handicapped children in normal classes is impressive and has repercussions beyond the effect on handicapped pupils themselves, in that it opens up means of action (support staff, group work, teaching) for assisting children with learning*

*difficulties. How long will it take to achieve the goal of integration? Is it possible to devise ways and means of assessing results in qualitative terms, from the standpoints both of the socialisation of these pupils and their progress and the knowledge that they acquire? What can be done to generalise these attitudes and practices, identify more exactly the difficulties pupils encounter, and differentiate and individualise teaching practice? In this regard, what lessons are being learnt from the progress of the "160 hours" reform?*

Question 12

*A frequent complaint in upper secondary institutions is that middle school does not do enough to prepare children for the cognitive demands of the upper cycle and is content merely to see them blossom forth. What is the opinion of the Italian authorities on this subject, and where are the new curricula leading the middle school in this regard? Are there any plans to improve liaison between middle schools and upper secondary institutions?*

Question 13

*The collegial bodies have opened up a new area of responsibility for parents. How can it be consolidated and extended, especially as regards pedagogical or educational action in the strict sense of those terms? Should not the "establishment project" involve parents, not only in its conception but in its implementation and assessment?*

Question 14

*The primary and middle schools are required to offer opportunities for adults who left school at an early age to complete their basic education. Are the authorities satisfied that the present provision is adequate to meet the latent as well as the expressed demand for adult education? Have they considered the barriers facing adults who wish to return to education, for example the intense demands made by the present one-year course?*

*Mr. Moret* arranged his presentation of the questions regarding compulsory education, *la scuola dell'obbligo*, under three headings: aims and objectives, the organisation of teaching and school administration.

On the subject of aims and objectives, Mr. Moret mentioned that a national commission had just completed its work on primary school curricula, which had not been revised since 1955. On the other hand, as regards the middle school, this was quite a remarkable creation which had been in advance of that in many neighbouring countries following the merger and the unification of all educational streams for all children between eleven and fourteen. In addition, reform of middle school curricula had been put into effect in 1979.

The examiners had felt that in primary schools there was continuing divergency of views concerning the cultural aspect of the educational objective. Should the school's cultural aims be kept fairly high or was it sufficient to prepare the children gently in the school environment for life in the community?

Another point which needed to be raised was that of the transition from primary to middle school. These two levels had staff and traditions of a very different type, which inevitably caused difficulties of transition. Would the current reform of primary school curricula improve the situation?

As regards the organisation of education, the possibility of lowering the starting age for compulsory education to five was currently under discussion. The question was whether this additional year should be spent at the primary or pre-primary level. In recent years the public

sector had been responsible for almost all of the growth in pre-primary education, taking over what had been primarily a private and Roman Catholic sector. Would this additional year simply mean that children would be obliged by law to attend nursery schools rather than as a matter of free choice as at present, or would it mean adding a year to primary education?

As regards school hours, the usual system was six 4-hour days and the staff was used to this rhythm. For some time there had been a move to increase the number of hours. This would certainly cause problems of organisation, particularly as far as the staff was concerned. Would this be a means of mopping up the surplus? And, finally, how was it proposed to incorporate within the new timetable the optional, extra-curricular courses that a fair number of pupils attended and which were now part of the normal activities of primary schools in Italy?

Mr. Moret's third point with regard to the organisation of education was the remarkable effort that had been made to integrate physically and mentally handicapped children into normal classes. A particular feature of the Italian approach was that this had been done by means of legislation, and in such a swift and even forcible manner for there to have been talk of uncontrolled integration of the handicapped within the system. It amounted to a challenge to schools and to teachers in particular. Mr. Moret considered that integrating handicapped children within this highly organised and what endeavoured to be an entirely collective system of instruction meant confronting Italian education with a totally different challenge.

On school administration, Mr. Moret pointed out that Italian education was no longer the monolithic and centralised system that it had been. Since the end of the 1960s there had been a gradual dismantling of the hierarchical structures as regards administration, staff evaluation and the possibility of ensuring the application of curricula formulated at a higher level of authority. There was a very strong move towards management by the teaching staff, both collectively through their associations, and within individual schools. Amongst the collegial bodies within the school, evidence of this was to be seen in the ascendancy that the lower body – the teachers' assembly – had gained over the higher body comprising parents and teachers. One of the questions in the Examiners' Report was how to revert to a more balanced situation by restoring the parents' role in, for example, the definition of the establishment project.

Another major source of difficulties as regards school administration in Italy was decentralisation. Because of the vertical division of responsibilities, any educational plan or initiative always came from the central authorities but the logistic support had to be supplied by the grass roots level. The central authorities had no means of bringing pressure to bear on the grass roots level, except by introducing new laws; however, it was said that what was needed was less legislation. The result was, therefore, that in the area of compulsory education, local authorities acted in very different ways to suit their own interests. This division was apparent with respect to the whole problem of medical, social and welfare assistance for the handicapped, the school being responsible only for their education. The same applied in the case of the reform of primary school hours: how was it intended to deal with all the administrative problems that poorer communities, particularly in the south of the country, would have to face when a single class would be in school for the entire day? Similarly there was the whole question of equipment and resources: documentation, libraries, audio-visual aids – all those things that could help to individualise instruction. The State might insist on individualisation but equipment was the responsibility of the local authorities, who had no say in educational planning.

In conclusion, Mr. Moret said that in this system, which had originated essentially at the central government level, the whole onus in the end fell on the teachers themselves. However, primary school teachers in particular had a relatively limited basic training. This was due to

the number of teachers who had been hastily recruited during the boom years. Moreover, in one respect they were highly protected from a union standpoint as regards their rights and duties, yet they were in some ways ill-equipped to bear the brunt of the challenge facing education. Mr. Moret considered that the problem confronting Italian education was to assess correctly all the consequences of the present situation; with the collapse of the hierarchy all the burden fell on the teacher who needed to be helped and won over. The examiners had been struck by the profound "humanism" in Italian schools. Despite all the difficulties, the teachers' reaction was always sincere. It was on this that one should rely.

*Mr. Scurati* stated that the Commission for the Revision of Primary School Curricula had completed its work only ten days previously. It had emphasized the need to increase and improve the "cognitive" content of education; it suggested, for example, the teaching of a foreign language during the last three years of primary education. It recommended greater emphasis first on mathematical and scientific subjects and second on teaching of the nationl language. Basically, the need was to improve the overall quality of the teaching; it was hoped that it would be possible to make greater use of the media in this respect.

The examiners were right in stating that there was a lack of continuity between primary and middle schools. So far it had not proved possible to reach a national consensus on the creation of one basic school from age 6 to 14. The new primary school curricula should help to facilitate the transition but it did not look as though it would be possible to modify yet again the middle school curricula which had been in force only since 1979. The educational aims of the 1979 reforms were very lofty but they were proving quite difficult to apply. Another objective was to establish continuity with the upper secondary level, but as yet there was no specific proposal in this respect.

The basic problem as regards continuity within the compulsory education process was without doubt the fundamentally different mentality of teachers in the two types of school. The idea of creating a single body of teachers had not been accepted and there was no agreement on the possibility of joint teacher training. The alternatives were therefore to raise the standard in the primary school by providing university training for the teachers and making more widely available the opportunities for in-service training and joint work in both types of school; teachers could, for example, consult each other on the problems that arise with regard to curricula.

Obviously, successful education depended on having competent teachers. Similarly, whether or not any reform was successfully implemented also depended on the teachers. The emphasis therefore needed to be on their professional competence and their ability to interact with their pupils if maximum results were to be achieved.

As regards the extension of compulsory education there was a widespread conviction in Italy that schooling should begin at the age of five. Many wanted to give children of that age more opportunities for "cognitive" learning. However, there was strong resistance to the idea of lowering the age of primary education by one year. About 60 per cent of opinion in Italy favoured a compulsory pre-primary year whereas some 40 per cent seemed to prefer lowering the starting age for primary education. The Commission, however, had come to no decision on this point.

The Commission made some very clear recommendations with regard to educational activities. It stressed the need for more thorough cultural training. It recommended some 30 hours of instruction per week, which would make it possible to incorporate much of what had been traditionally extra-curricular instruction. There would be about ten hours of mathematical and scientific subjects plus foreign languages, about ten hours of introduction to the world around and artistic expression, and a further ten hours of "humanist" activities, reading, writing, history, etc. Physical education would be separate from this.

With regard to the integration of handicapped children, there was no widespread opposition to this, although there was a tendency to draw a distinction between the severely mentally handicapped, whom it was difficult to enrol in schools, and the remainder. A plea was made that schools should be given full assistance for anything involving the provision of therapeutic and clinical attention, and lastly, teachers were still insufficiently able to appreciate the individual needs of handicapped children.

Replying to the question on technical facilities, *Mr. Scurati* stated that some action was being taken, particularly as regards school libraries. Specialist teachers would be trained and centres would be set up to serve schools. Much was expected from a more widespread use of modern information technologies in education; the surplus of teachers could be absorbed into retraining schemes in this area.

With respect to the collegial bodies, the transition towards a democratic form of organisation that was less politically and more educationally oriented, seemed slow and difficult. If parents were to be fully involved in the schools' educational projects, then the schools' real scope for decision-making needed to be clearly defined.

Lastly, Mr. Scurati pointed out that the problem of illiteracy was of a different nature from what it had been in the past: it was a cultural rather than a technical problem. A person might know how to read and write but still be culturally illiterate. In this respect, new lines of approach needed to be worked out that were different from the traditional methods and designed to achieve complete rehabilitation. Attention needed to be directed to this problem and such was the objective of the new curricula.

The *Representative for Germany* said that in his country the lowering of the school age was no longer the subject of impassioned debates, ever since the emphasis had been put on the introduction to the world around rather than on the cognitive content of pre-primary education. He then asked whether it would not be in the interest of pupils to introduce a certain degree of ability grouping in Italian schools or whether Italy still preferred to retain a single curriculum in all areas. Lastly, what was the nature and the role of private education in Italy?

The *French Delegate* asked whether the transition from primary to middle school was entirely automatic, without any repeating or assessment of some kind. What problems were caused by the heterogeneity of the pupils in this system of a single curriculum for everyone, and what solutions were envisaged?

The *Representative for the United States* said she would like to know how the quality of the education was assessed without any repeating and without examination between primary, lower secondary and upper secondary levels. Increasing the number of hours or years of education, although this was an expensive undertaking, did not necessarily improve quality. How therefore could one be certain that the Italian education system fulfilled its obligations towards the children in the present context of serious underemployment?

The question of handicapped children was one that interested the *Delegate for Ireland.* His country was proud of its highly developed system of special schools. What was happening in Italy now as regards the staff, buildings and equipment belonging to the schools for special education?

The *Representative for New Zealand* said that currently in his country an attempt was being made to piece together the various elements of the school curricula to see what this amounted to in total for each pupil. They wanted to carry out a thoroughgoing reform of the basic compulsory curricula for children aged 13, 14 and 15. With this in mind, they were trying to define what the country's future would be and what type of person they would like to see the system producing. This was an extremely difficult task mainly because teachers were very attached to the traditional teaching methods for each discipline. Did the Italian

Delegation have any comments to make as regards ways of influencing teachers' attitudes in the light of its experience in restructuring curricula? Writing and publishing learned documents was one thing; changing the everyday activity of teachers was another.

The *Austrian Delegate* said that his country much admired the initiative with regard to integration for the handicapped. Had not this scheme proved extremely expensive? Had it been readily accepted by society?

The *Representative for the Netherlands* felt that it was the responsibility primarily of local communities and local authorities to ensure that school curricula were consistent and that there was continuity between primary and secondary education. What were the central authorities doing to encourage activity at the local level within the education system? Was it possible to make use of the schools inspectorate in this connection?

In *Mr. Scurati's* opinion, the criteria used in grouping children by ability could not be applied in Italy. This system of segregation on the basis of ability and difficulty in learning no longer reflected the way of thinking of educationists and teachers. There was currently some questioning of the principles on which schools operated and an ideal theoretical solution had been suggested, based on the principle of individual instruction whereby attention would be directed to the individual rather than to a group with similar abilities. However, a balance needed to be found between new and traditional approaches and attitudes.

Mr. Scurati said that private education certainly did exist and was even tending to expand. Most private schools were run by religious, mainly Catholic, institutions. It was not the most gifted children who attended such schools but rather those whose parents could afford the very high fees. The problem of private schools was currently the subject of much debate of a political and social character.

He said that, in the last analysis, there was only one way of converting such ideas into action, and that was to train teachers in a different way. There were other ways – administrative, disciplinary, legislative – but it was on training that all the energy should be focused.

*Mr. Visalberghi* told the Review Meeting that marks were no longer awarded in compulsory schools since the entry into force in 1977 of an Act forbidding this. A system of regular assessments had been adopted and these were carefully recorded throughout the child's school career. Every year written assessments were made of each pupil in everyday language that both pupils and parents could understand. Research carried out in 1970 had shown that from an international standpoint the results achieved in Italy were very good although pupils were not used to the system of objective assessment. However, the findings had shown that the performance of Italian secondary education was far less satisfactory; in the case of upper secondary education, Italy had come last amongst the advanced countries. It was of course not easy to know how to interpret these findings. Currently they were looking for objective ways of assessing pupils' work and particularly their written output. However, so far no reliable method had been found. As regards examinations at the end of middle school, pupils sat an internal exam. Their work was graded by their own teachers. They were not given marks but rated in accordance with a standard terminology. There were some five or so grades, and these were useful for selection purposes since there might be a limited number of places available in some secondary schools, with the result that it was sometimes necessary to apply geographical or ability criteria.

On the subject of curricula, *Mr. Visalberghi* said that these were very flexible. Teachers were allowed a great deal of freedom. Specific themes were suggested, particularly in the case of scientific subjects, but it was up to the individual or the group to choose between them. At the moment, ready-made instructional material was not generally used. The subject matter therefore varied greatly; it all depended on the teachers or teams of teachers.

On the subject of lowering the school age, the *Under-Secretary of State* emphasized that the purpose of this operation was purely educational – it was not a question of removing a child from its environment but of developing its creative and learning ability.

As regards handicapped children, Italy's decision was irreversible – it reflected the wishes of society as a whole. However, to be perfectly honest, although their enrolment in schools had been successfully accomplished, they had not yet been fully integrated. Support for their families, voluntary activities and other forms of assistance were not equally available throughout the country. For example, community schemes were less well developed in the *Mezzogiorno* than in the North. The task that had to be achieved was to remedy the shortage of professional skills among those in charge and the lack of services which put a strain on the families and made them wish that they still had the special schools which used previously to cater for the handicapped.

The position of private education was a political issue that also had ideological overtones. In Italy a number of constitutional problems were involved. In the last analysis, however, it was a matter of economic options and priorities. Public sector education was healthy enough for there to be no question of a conflict. On the contrary, there was a desire to progress towards equality. It would be necessary to take account of the current growth of private education and the fact that not all of the schools were of the same standard or provided the same educational structure and environment. Public sector schools had experienced some particularly difficult times in terms of an excessive number of pupils, inadequately trained teachers and problems such as drugs, and it was this that led parents to choose private education which seemed to them to be safer and better supervised. What was needed was to restore order in public sector education and improve the quality and the productivity of both systems to make them complementary and non-antagonistic parts of a whole system.

# III

## THE UPPER SECONDARY CYCLE AND TRANSITION TO WORKING LIFE

Question 15

*Nearly all OECD countries are today deeply exercised about how best to organise training as well as educational opportunities for young people during the three to five years immediately following compulsory schooling. Italy has opted for a division of responsibilities between the Ministries of Education and Labour. What are seen to be the advantages and disadvantages, if any, of this division, particularly in view of the fact that the education system is still centrally controlled whereas vocational training has become a regional responsibility? Can centrally controlled curricula be flexible enough to anticipate changing labour market needs? Are the authorities satisfied that in practice upper secondary students have adequate opportunities to transfer from one type of institution to another?*

Question 16

*Do the education authorities feel that they should assume at least some responsibility for assisting young people who left the middle school or dropped out of the upper secondary school without marketable qualifications? Has any consideration been given to joining with the Ministry of Labour and other relevant public departments in offering a social guarantee of some education or training or a combination of both for all school-leavers? To this end are relations close enough between the schools and employers so that the latter can keep the former fully informed of their changing needs?*

Question 17

*Should not the principle of freedom of choice, proclaimed and followed at all levels of the education system, result in the development of structures and action concerned with guidance and counselling? Here the division of tasks between the State (educational guidance) and the regions (vocational guidance) may lead to difficulties, as may also the tasks assigned to the new "districts". The Italian authorities seem to be relying mainly on the teachers themselves. How can teachers be motivated, informed and trained in the necessary techniques both at the middle and upper secondary school level?*

Question 18

*Will not the introduction of a closer link between upper secondary school studies and university studies lead to even greater importance being attached to the choices that have to be made on leaving middle school? For this reason, the question of developing structures and action concerned with guidance will be all the more crucial. What other steps can be taken to reduce the risks entailed in making choices at too early an age?*

Question 19

*The examiners have expressed the view that the curriculum in the upper secondary schools is unduly biased towards traditional subjects and that the examination system leads to rigidity. To what extent is it proposed to modify the curriculum and the examination system in the light of the planned introduction of the* biennio *and a general reform of the whole upper secondary sector?*

Question 20

*The effective teaching of modern languages poses a difficult problem for all OECD countries, and the cost/efficiency ratio is rarely satisfactory. In Italy the problem seems to be aggravated by specific factors (the continuing prestige of the classical* liceo, *the spread of* licei *specialising in languages in the private sector, the rarity of exchange schemes with other countries, the shortage of English teachers). Will advantage be taken of the reform of upper secondary education to address this problem?*

Introducing the questions on the upper secondary school *Mr. Mitter* pointed out that the Italian officials themselves thought this sector especially problematic. The traditional type of upper secondary education was clearly too rigid. However, some extremely interesting reform projects were currently being discussed. Pilot projects had also been launched in several schools. The examiners had found that there was still not enough research being done. The absence of empirical observational data was felt at both statistics and qualitative analysis levels. Bearing in mind the slow and uncertain progress in introducing the reform, the examiners had been impressed by the teachers' commitment.

In spite of all the difficulties, there was no doubt that upper secondary education was firmly established in Italy – indeed, it was expanding. Its structure was dual: the Ministry of Education was responsible for full-time education establishments whilst either the Ministry of Labour or the Regional Labour Offices were responsible for vocational training. The Italian Delegation might indicate whether this split was successful or not from the pupils' standpoint. Since there was a plan to extend compulsory schooling by two years, what would be the implications for this dual system? What changes would have to be brought, particularly in view of the objective of equal opportunities in the compulsory school?

Mr. Mitter approved the system of values on which full-time upper secondary education was based. He thought that it provided a useful lesson as far as theoretical and general knowledge was concerned. However, in the curricula not enough account was taken of the pupils' practical and vocational requirements, especially in the light of the present economic situation. Very few schools organised practical work. Admittedly, pupils were sufficiently enterprising to find work which provided training during school holidays, but they ought to receive more support from the school and there ought to be more consultation between schools and employers.

General education curricula were currently far too rigid, especially as to the choice of

optional subjects. Too much emphasis was laid on the classics, at the expense of scientific subjects, even in scientific lycées. More tuition in foreign languages was also required, if only on the grounds that any modern society in Western Europe nowadays had to be outward-looking.

The problem of continuity also needed to be resolved. Middle school and upper secondary curricula were too divorced. Pupils should be helped to move from the non-selective and single-curriculum lower cycle to the selective and diversified system in the upper one. One deficiency that needed urgently to be made good was the lack of guidance. Fourteen-year-olds needed organised support when selecting the stream to be followed later. Likewise, the very high dropout rate during the upper cycle might possibly be due to the fact that there was not enough information available on the possibilities of shifting across from one stream to another. The lack of guidance was also apparent for those entering working life prior to or immediately following the end of upper secondary education.

Difficulties were also encountered when passing from secondary to higher education. The conditions for sitting the school leaving examination, the *maturità*, were not sufficiently flexible. In view of the fact that the tests were so rigid, it did not seem appropriate for examiners to have such wide freedom for selecting themes. Futhermore, although upper secondary education was specialised and led to specific *maturità* diplomas, access to all university faculties was open to everyone regardless of the option previously followed.

In Italy, preparations for a secondary education reform had been under way for two years. The proposals were excellent. The question was: when would they be implemented?

*The Representative for France* said that so far in Italy much importance had clearly been attached to general culture, even in vocational training. What was the pupils' attitude towards this, in view of the fact that in many countries young people seemed to be increasingly rejecting any training which had no concrete, immediate or obvious objective at first sight?

*Mr. Pescia* explained that the links between the education system and the economy were slender because Italy had not adopted the manpower planning approach. Education was inspired by social demand rather than the market. This was why training was mostly general. There were two categories of vocational training: a long five-year cycle and a short two- to three-year one. According to the statistics, far more long-cycle diplomas were awarded than short ones, which seemed rather surprising.

Since economic development in Italy had occurred before the expansion in education, people started work without training. In future, rational planning would take over from spontaneous but inconsistent development. The upper cycle did not in fact correspond to reality. It led to a general diploma even where the curricula followed were specialised. Nowadays, small enterprises could no longer provide sufficient training on the job. Emphasis should be laid on vocational training during the three years of the upper cycle. At the same time, other streams must be promoted, apprenticeship developed, the entry of young people into active life facilitated, and use made of the potential educational contribution of the world of work and enterprises. The proposed reforms required that curricula should be flexible and amendable without further legislation. They should be tailored to local requirements or to specific sectors of activity.

The desire for social advancement contributed to the fact that curricula were neither sufficiently practical nor sufficiently channelled towards working life. In Italy, there was a problem of surplus qualified people which could not be ascribed to the high standard of training. Rather, it was due to a quantitative imbalance arising from the demand for social advancement. Statistics confirmed that young people were aiming at more advanced training

and those who continued their studies in the long cycle of technical education often went on to higher education. The reasons for doing so obviously varied but 50 per cent of those obtaining diplomas in this cycle entered university. In order to prevent this scattering effect, it was necessary to rationalise the system, to prevent wastage, and to provide better guidance. There was a very great demand for higher education because many students used it as a safety-valve while they took stock of their future careers.

The dualism of the State and the regions was difficult to understand for a foreign observer. It had both advantages and disadvantages. A regional network for vocational training could provide a second opportunity. It also led to more flexible organisation. On the other hand, it was to be regretted that the apprenticeship system was being discarded. In Italy, there was no tripartite consultation as in the United Kingdom or France, where employees and trade unions attended the committees responsible for drawing up curricula, and where they also had a say in the financing of continuing training. The regional system would in particular have to be adapted in order to allow co-ordination between the Ministry and the regional network of vocational training centres. The reform also proposed to give the regions a leading role in first-level training.

As far as guidance was concerned, a distinction should be made between that for pupils and that for adults, which was organised by the regions. The guidance system was governed by the information system for which the regions were responsible and which catered both for young people and for adults. It would be necessary to develop and co-ordinate the networks but nothing was planned at national level. Support for local services and enterprises would be financed from public funds. For the time being, the system was not entirely satisfactory, though it worked better than might be imagined.

In connection with guidance, *Mr. Visalberghi* explained that under the proposed system, as in the past, it was at middle-school (lower secondary) level that pupils would select streams since their choice would have to be made prior to entry into the upper cycle. It would be easy to switch during the first two years of upper secondary education since the system was required to organise "catch-up" classes. It was the practice for teachers to be knowledgeable about guidance. Help could be provided to those taking on this role of advising pupils by improving the quantity and quality of information available. For this purpose, the links between local and regional authorities and regional and state schools would have to be improved.

The basic syllabus for all pupils during the first two years of the five-year cycle would be broadened. During this phase, it would not be possible to follow lessons in more than two specialised subjects which should not account for more than 55 per cent of the school week. There were also plans for a possible experimental short cycle where half the syllabus would represent a common core but the other half would give access to a third specialised year in a national or regional school. On completing this cycle, pupils would obtain a lower-level vocational training diploma. This would be awarded either by the region or by the state school under agreement with the regional authorities. Some thought that the curricula should be more diversified, but others disagreed, as they wished pupils to be able to switch courses easily or to go back to school, which would not be possible if curricula were too diversified.

Each upper secondary stream could lead to the end of study diploma, the *maturità*, giving access to certain university courses. Diploma-holders would also be able to find a job either directly or by following a specialised course organised by the regional system or by an employer. In fact, training courses under the secondary system did not necessarily aim at preparing young people for specific jobs but were intended rather to provide the best opportunities through basic pre-vocational training. The *maturità* examination would be taken at the age of 18 or 19 if primary education were made to begin at the age of five. It was intended to reform the structure of the examination, since research showed that it was not

efficient. Experiments in this field had been under way since 1969. This reform would be applied when curricula for the upper secondary cycle were reviewed and not in five or six years' time, as intended until recently.

Mr. Visalberghi thought that the drop-out rate would probably remain high. Several steps had been taken to compensate for this: agreement had been reached on 150 hours annual release for employees, the creation of continuing educational training programmes and the establishment of training contracts, with the help of the EEC in certain cases. This obviously did not suffice. It was hoped that the regional system might set up special training courses for drop-outs. It would be easier for the regions to do this since they had a very flexible system and could act effectively in a very short space of time.

The imbalance between the classics and more scientific subjects would be entirely removed by the reforms. Classics would be taught in classical *licei* only.

# IV

## TEACHER TRAINING AND UNIVERSITIES

Question 21

*We are under the impression that teacher education and training is now considered of very high priority in the Italian system, where fewer teachers have had any formal training in teaching methods and curriculum development than in most other OECD countries. In a context of falling school rolls and low teacher recruitment, is it intended to concentrate on improving initial training or in-service training in order to improve teacher quality? What special measures, if any, will be introduced to improve the quality of science teaching?*

Question 22

*How will in-service training be organised and financed? Will teachers be given adequate time off to take courses? What kind of staff will design and give courses? Can the in-service functions of the IRRSAE be carried out successfully without closer links with those responsible for teacher allocation and more resources to mount courses including those that are school-based?*

Question 23

*The intention to create an all-graduate profession, including nursery and elementary school teachers, raises various questions. Is the intention to use the universities to undertake this education and training likely to present some difficulties? Will the faculties concerned be able to recruit new staff with the appropriate experience? If not, is there a danger that courses may be over-theoretical with insufficient emphasis on well supervised teaching practice? What is the future of the* Istituto magistrale *and the* Magistero *faculties? What training will be provided in future for the teachers of practical and vocational subjects?*

Question 24

*What steps should be taken to improve access to the universities for working-class and lower income groups, for women, and for those from the poorer regions? For example, should there be more financial support for those from poor homes? Should there be more encouragement given to girls to enter university in the last years of secondary school and in particular to enter faculties where they are substantially under-represented?*

Question 25

*By international standards the wastage rates in Italian universities are high. Are any attempts being made to decrease this high wastage especially in the early years of courses? For example, should a new intermediate qualification be introduced at the end of two years of university study which would allow more students to leave with something to show for their studies than at present? Should there be more academic support and supervision of students than exists at present with greater emphasis put on ensuring attendance at courses? Can policies of this kind be justified in terms of Italian priorities?*

Question 26

*Should more consideration be given to creating new institutions to provide shorter post-school courses than those currently provided by the university, especially courses with a strong vocational component, some of which might also cater for prime-age students without the maturità?*

*Ms. Blackstone* said that the Italian authorities were currently paying close attention to teaching training. The difficulties involved were partly due to the fact that the division between primary and secondary teacher training had been maintained for too long. Most developed countries had abandoned or were abandoning this dual system. The Italian authorities were currently reflecting on ways of changing the traditional conservative system, which had been maintained perhaps because of the probably undesirable difference in social status between the two types of teacher.

The Italian authorities were planning a major reform of the teaching profession. Several bills had already been voted but it would be some time before their introduction had any impact. The basic reform concerned training. All student teachers would have university training.

It was intended to use the *facoltà di magistero* for training teachers. The main role of these faculties hitherto had been to help teachers to improve their subject knowledge at university level. The question was therefore whether they would be in a position to give student teachers the vocational training they required. Also, since these faculties had no experience in scientific education, how would it be possible for them to train teachers capable of teaching scientific subjects, even at primary level? Another problem was that these faculties had hardly any experience of supervised teaching practice in the classroom. What did the Italian authorities intend to do regarding these problems?

It would be very important for the training not to be too theoretical. It would have to include full and uniform training in the subjects to be taught, teaching methods, assessment, curriculum development and all other pedagogic matters. The examiners wondered whether it would be possible for the higher education system in Italy to adapt to these requirements.

Major projects were being planned concerning in-service training. The examiners doubted, however, whether sufficient preparations had been made for implementing the necessary structures. In-service training was undoubtedly as important as initial training, especially since staff cutbacks would limit the recruitment of new teachers. Had the Italian authorities planned all necessary financial structures and resources for an effective in-service training system? The examiners thought that it would be necessary to improve the links between the bodies responsible for courses and the direct employers of teachers, especially concerning timetables and the release of teachers. The new IRRSAE constituted a major development, but would it be easy to organise both research and training activities at the same

time? In-service training at school was another factor that should not be overlooked. The examiners thought that it would be useful to develop an inspectorate and an advisory service. Ms. Blackstone ended her comments on teacher training by suggesting that the Italian authorities ought to take a closer look at the teaching of practical subjects in vocational training for secondary school teachers.

The examiners had been impressed by the way access to higher education in Italy had been made easier. Anyone who had been awarded the *maturità* could enrol at a faculty. This had undoubtedly enabled certain categories of the population – women, people from certain regions or from less-favoured social strata – to be better represented among students than had been the case twenty years ago.

But there were drawbacks to easier access to higher education. As already said, pupils did not always follow the same specialisation in secondary and higher education. It was also noted that in many cases there were not enough teachers or facilities for the number of students. What might seem even worse was the high drop-out rate. First, it was an unnecessary waste of resources, and second, it could produce a feeling of failure among young people.

The examiners had five proposals to submit to the Italian Delegation concerning higher education. First, they felt the structure of diplomas ought to be more diversified. It might be useful to create a two-year diploma for those to whom this might appeal. Perhaps all students might prepare for this diploma; they could decide later whether or not to stay another two or three years at university in order to become graduates.

Second, in order to provide better continuity between secondary and higher education, there ought to be more contact between those reponsible for the two systems.

Ms. Blackstone's third proposal was that the structure of university courses should be better planned. In particular, more emphasis should be laid on students attending the courses for which they had enrolled. Generally speaking, the quality of the proposed services ought to be raised.

Ms. Blackstone wondered whether the Italian authorities had ever considered developing the student support system. She was not just thinking of accommodation and catering, but also of loans, possibly along Swedish lines, or even grants for the poorest students. This might probably help those of working-class background, where the drop-out rate seemed higher than for the others.

Finally, the examiners would suggest that the government might create short vocational training courses specifically aimed at adults and young people holding vocational training diplomas from the secondary system. Examiners had noted that in other countries universities were often reluctant to set up this type of programme.

The *Spanish Delegate* asked how it was ensured that Italian universities could accept all students who applied. In other words, how did the selection process operate in practice between and within universities? Did the government encourage competition between higher education institutions? Was there a system for channelling students towards a given faculty? Second, the Delegate wished to know whether the Italian authorities had sufficient experience to plan how many students would be attracted by short university courses and how many would like to pursue their studies later on.

As for teacher training, *the French Delegate* asked what was being envisaged regarding the very difficult problem of recruitment and continuous technical updating of the training departments for vocational training staff? Finally, were there any plans for short two-year technical training courses and how would these link up with the world of work?

Referring to the high cost per student and the grant system applied in his country where selection was more restricted, *the United Kingdom Delegate* asked whether there was any

information available on the relationship between drop-out rate and financial support to students.

The *German Delegate* enquired whether the short cycle planned in the reform would aim at giving students training of immediate application in working life. Had the authorities considered the possibility of setting up institutions specifically designed to provide vocational training in the form of a short cycle? Finally, had they considered special examinations to restrict access to university?

In connection with the relatively open access to university in Italy, *Mr. Papadopoulos*, Secretariat, said that there were almost as many Greek students in Italy as in Greece itself. Was it intended to maintain this open access policy?

On the question of the short university cycle, *Mr. Pescia* relied that under the new legislation an intermediate level, a "special level", would be introduced. This cycle would not give students access to further university training. In fact, such a structure could not solve the problem of entry into working life. The need was stressed everywhere, however, for post-secondary training not provided by universities, on the model of the "polytechnics" in the United Kingdom. This was why the law called on the regions to promote activities of this kind. Above all, the aim was for the regions to introduce applied training courses that universities were not in a position to supply. In this connection, however, it should be recalled that diplomas from technical upper secondary schools and *laurea* had considerable appeal to young people, who were certainly not willing to sacrifice two years of study without receiving a universally recognised diploma on completion. The world of work encouraged this race for diplomas. Industry, which found it difficult to recruit qualified staff, set store by diplomas to help selection. This system was too simple and offered too few alternatives.

It could not be said that higher education was in a generally healthy situation. Problems arose concerning qualifications, cost and rationalisation. It was perhaps the basic understanding of the nature and objectives of the system that needed to be changed. The current image of the educational process did not help the student to assess the options open to him and did not therefore encourage him to acquire practical skills.

*Mr. Sette* explained that the decision to open access to higher education to a large number of pupils was taken towards the end of the 1960s, at a time of student strife. Selection used to be too restrictive and although the move in the other direction had gone a little too far, freer access had opened higher education to a greater proportion of young people from the less-favoured social strata. More comprehensive measures ought no doubt to have been taken to cope with the considerable influx of new students. An unexpected outcome of this experiment had been the little correlation between the performance of the top students at university level and the subjects they had followed as secondary pupils. Consequently, even though the intention was to restrict access in general to certain branches of study for those who had been prepared for them, any others who wished to do so would be admitted by examination. Since more open access had removed several defects in the system and had been beneficial from the educational and also the political point of view, it was out of the question to reconsider the spirit of the reform.

The drop-out rate had indeed been very high during the first two years, but those going on to the third year usually obtained their *laurea*. Mr. Sette stressed the fact that those who dropped out did so voluntarily. The university did not dismiss students. It was possible for them to go on enrolling at the faculty from year to year without any restriction, so that they were not made to feel that they had failed. In any case, students often left university because they had found a job in keeping with the studies they had completed so far. Thus, for many students, the university acted as a continuous training institution. Furthermore, once access to university studies had been made easier, the excessively rigid programmes in use at that time

had been dropped. Nowadays, students could make up their own programmes to which the faculty could agree or not after assessing the educational value of the courses proposed. As a result, students studied what interested them most or was useful to them both now and for the future. Many drop-outs could therefore be explained by the fact that the student had used the university as a further training centre in order to obtain the skills he wished to acquire. Likewise, many students used the first two years at university as filling-in time before deciding what they wanted to do later.

As for the length of study, in Italy the option of a two-year cycle for all students followed by more specialised training for those wishing to continue had not been selected. It was considered that society preferred to maintain the *laurea* tradition. Nevertheless, in some subjects it was not thought necessary to have four years of study. For example, in the case of paramedical subjects, the legislation provided for two-year diplomas awarded by special institutions outside the university structures, even where it was the faculty of medicine that organised them. It was intended to make regions participate in the organisation of this kind of institution, but the project had not yet been concluded.

*Mr. Visalberghi* said that he was in favour of university training for all teaching staff. He did not think, however, that they should all receive the same training. For teachers in the compulsory schooling system he proposed three years' initial training, possibly followed by a short *laurea* training for those teaching specialised subjects. Even in primary education there was now a need for specialised teachers. For teachers in the upper secondary cycle, he suggested a four-year training course in the subject to be taught, followed by one year of teacher training.

*Mr. Avveduto* said that whereas during the period since the Second World War the country as a whole had undergone rapid and radical changes, the university system had moved towards new goals at such a slow pace as to be like the famous river described by Julius Caesar, that flowed so imperceptibly that no one could tell in which direction it was moving. He attributed this static situation to institutional inertia and to the complex administrative processes characteristic of a highly centralised system of control.

In his view a new university model was called for. There should be a definite separation from the central power. Universities should become autonomous communities of scholars charged by the central government to transmit knowledge, to educate trained professionals and to generate new knowledge in collaboration with international, national and local institutions. Each university should design and examine its own courses. The universities should also enjoy financial autonomy, their budgets being allocated through a structure akin to that of the University Grants Committee in the United Kingdom. The acquisition of autonomy would terminate the system whereby professors were selected by national competition and enable each university to make its own appointments.

*Part Three*

# SUMMARY OF THE BACKGROUND REPORT

prepared by the Italian Authorities

# I

# INSTITUTIONS

## Decentralisation and participation

Over the last ten years large-scale institutional changes have taken place in the administration of the education system, probably the most far-reaching changes since the unification of Italy. These changes have been of two kinds. The first concern the new responsibilities transferred to bodies representing government and autonomous local authorities; the second relate to the creation of organisations for participation.

For more than a century the Italian education system as a whole had remained organised around the central state administration and the movement has been towards a gradual increase in the scope of intervention by government through the Ministry of Education. However, the 1948 Constitution challenged the centralised structure by setting out two main lines of policy for the education system: recognition and promotion of autonomous local bodies, and the implementation of the widest possible decentralisation of all the services under the responsibility of the State. But this new direction indicated by the Constitution was not followed up, and the fundamental debate on decentralisation remained open.

In the early 1970s the two main elements of the reform of the system of educational management began to become clear: the institutional aspect which was the enhancement of the role of the local authorities; and the move towards greater participation (which gained momentum after 1968), aimed at replacing administrative management, at different levels, by participatory management, through collegiate bodies of a representative character. But it was not until 1973 that the legislation creating the collegiate bodies also laid the foundations for the planning of genuine administrative decentralisation by transferring considerable powers and responsibilities to the regions. Similarly, the powers of the other local authorities, in particular the communes, were extended well beyond the traditional duties involved with the provision of suitable premises. They were now given administrative functions and, more generally, responsibilities for development, a field in which their initiatives can complement measures taken by the State. Little by little the local authoities are taking on a number of responsibilities relating to management: the geographical siting of schools, the development of infrastructure, including cultural infrastructure, needed for the operation of educational institutions, as well as liaison between the school and the local socio-economic environment which is tending increasingly to have a say in the cultural content of the educational process.

Participation as defined by the Orders of 31st May 1974 and which had originated in the combination of long-standing claims by the teachers with regard to self-management and the

enhancement of their role in line with Catholic tradition, and also in developments since 1968, has two main objectives: to replace administrative structures at different levels by setting up elected collegiate bodies representing specified social categories or the educational community; and to set up new provincial sub-divisions – districts – responsibility for which has been entrusted to the district school councils which constitute the new poles for decentralisation in the field of educational administration.

At the same time, at the level of higher education, a series of legislative measures were introduced between 1973 and 1980 to increase the autonomy of the universities. The same legislation provided for the creation of the following bodies: A National Education Council, the Minister's high-level Technical Advisory Body, with competence in the primary, secondary and artistic sectors of education for questions relating to pedagogical innovation and evaluation of the working of the education system; a National University Council – also an advisory body to the Minister of Education – which is competent to define the powers of the Minister in order to defend the autonomy of the teaching staff and the Advisory Committees for Research. In addition, the Provincial Education Council has been given a structure which enables it to extend its competence to all educational sectors with regard to educational facilities, financing of schools, etc.

Reference must also by made to the setting up of the District Education Council which is the only one of the participatory collegiate bodies which does not come under a state institution and which has specific competence for an explicitly designated territory. The function of this body is theoretically to provide for the participation of local communities and social groups in the local management of the the school, and it also plays a role in the planning of the development of the education system.

It is at the level of each primary and secondary institution that the most positive impact of participation is to be felt. Collegial commissions representing the different sectors of the school community look after management and the overall organisation of teaching. To be more precise, the Pedagogical Council (nursery and primary school) or the School Council (secondary school) is responsible for administrative management. These councils are in fact the deliberative bodies of the educational establishment for administrative questions. Management from the teaching point of view is the responsibility of the Education Council composed of all teachers in the school or the class, or inter-class Council in the case of primary schools.

The legislative provisions already mentioned have also provided the education system with bodies competent to improve the overall possibilities for innovation in management and which are likely to play an important role in the cultural life of schools. Institutions set up in this framework are: the European Education Centre (CEE), the library of pedagogical documentation (BDP), and the regional institutes for research, experimentation and updating of teaching methods (IRRSAE).

University institutions have not been the subject of a global reform over the last ten years, but they have benefited considerably from the legal provisions aimed at ensuring better participation in management of the education system and by the innovations made in the field of pedagogical organisation and research. Two organisations directed by a collegiate body have been set up in this connection: the University Commission which has the task of co-ordinating and monitoring experiments in departments and the Inter-departmental Centres whose role is to co-ordinate activities. In addition, faculty departments now have considerable autonomy in managing the funds they receive.

The vast movement of reforms launched in the 1970s has therefore changed the face of the educational system entirely, notably as the result of the large number of institutions with fairly considerable decision-making authority. However, such profound changes inevitably

give rise to certain problems of substance. There is, for example, the question whether the state school should be retained and with it a philosophy of education based on cultural pluralism in institutions – or whether, on the contrary, the education system should be made independent of the State. The replies obviously depend on the choices that are made; if schools are to continue to be state institutions, decentralisation in the sense of local autonomy cannot go beyond certain limits. If the opposite is the case, it is possible to envisage a complete transfer from central to local authorities. But it is obvious that in reality there is no such alternative. It would therefore seem desirable to establish a clearer definition of the limits and the operational capacity of the institutional structure recently established. In particular, it is necessary to review the role of the State and that of local authorities in the management of the education system and bring into line central and peripheral levels of school administration as proposed by different parties and the government itself. This problem concerns more particularly the educational district authority which encounters some difficulties in fulfilling its tasks owing to institutional problems and the present status of collegiate assemblies in each establishment, the organisation of which needs modification. A Bill already approved by the chamber of Deputies provides for a certain number of measures to this end, but it has been held up in the Senate for several years.

**Syllabi and teaching methods**

From the point of view of regulations and consequently content and methods of teaching, a certain number of innovations have been made in syllabi both in compulsory schooling and in higher secondary education and universities.

The great novelty has been the complete and non-discriminatory opening of the university to all those holding certificates of upper secondary education. But at this level the factor common to the different innovations is probably their provisional character, pending the long-awaited organic and global reforms, in the upper secondary sector and the universities, promised in government programmes and those of the main parties. On the other hand, the 1970 reforms have brought profound changes in compulsory schooling and in particular in the first cycle of secondary education, notably from the point of view of teaching methods. Latin has been abolished as an optional subject in the third year and technical and musical education extended to all pupils in the three years of this cycle. But the consequence of these initiatives has been excessive branching out from the basic common programme of compulsory schooling. All these new branches of education reflect the increasing demand for special qualifications that emerged in the post-war period, when the country was experiencing growing industrialisation and a rapid increase in the services sector. This explains the almost total lack of co-ordination and the fact that so few adjustments were made to the school and university system pending the reform which was believed to be imminent. This is why, in upper secondary schools even more than in compulsory schooling, it may be considered that the major streams of education are still of the traditional type, although there are signs at all levels of a movement towards the fixing of educational syllabi by local councils. The concept of curricula, for example, which is foreign to Italian tradition, is finding increasing favour among teachers involved in the organisation of paths of education.

**Level of education of the population**

Between 1950 and 1970 the number of first cycle secondary school pupils almost tripled (from 800 000 to 2 100 000), that of second cycle secondary education quadrupled

(from 415 000 to 1 570 000). In the universities student numbers also tripled: from 200 000 in 1950 to 600 000 in 1970.

The first consequence of this very high rate of expansion was a rise in the level of education of the population. There has in particular been a considerable decrease in illiteracy and an increase in school attendance at the level of the first cycle of secondary education: between 1951 and 1976 the illiteracy rate fell from 12.9 to 4.5 per cent and, over the same period, the number of persons without any certificate of education fell by almost half, from 46.3 to 24.8 per cent.

However, in looking at these encouraging figures it is necessary to take into account regional disparities. In southern Italy, despite the appreciable progress made, the rate of illiteracy is still much higher than in the North. The number of people with the certificate for primary studies is the same in the two areas, although the regions in northern Italy have a much higher percentage of people holding first cycle secondary diplomas. But at the level of the second cycle of secondary education and the university, it is surprising to note that percentages are almost the same for the two areas, if anything slightly higher in southern Italy.

This increase in the school attendance rates has also had considerable repercussions on the level of education of the labour force, with the exception of the older age groups which have higher percentages of illiterate people and people without school leaving certificates. The percentage of workers without the certificate of primary education, which was 79 in the 1950s, fell to 50.2 per cent during the 1970s. The rise in the standard of qualification is more marked in industry where the number of workers with the certificate of primary education only has fallen from 84 to 55.2 per cent, while the number of workers with an intermediate qualification is higher in the services sector.

During the same period, school attendance has increased spectacularly. Non-attendance has been practically eliminated, and nearly all pupils remain in school until the age of 14. Even in the age range where attendance is compulsory, attendance has tripled. Since 1960, the attendance rate at university has almost quadrupled, rising from 4.8 to 17.9 per cent. Interest in vocational training has revived appreciably. However, the most important innovation has been in adult education, where workers attend experimental courses designed to make up for missed compulsory schooling. Beginning with 38 700 adults in 1974, enrolments soared to over 100 000 by 1980. As a general rule, it can be said that formal educational needs have levelled off, whereas continuing or out-of-school education is still growing rapidly. This is true of out-of-school courses followed by school attenders, and of various kinds of private training activities designed for adults.

**The school attendance profile**

Within the different cycles – primary, lower secondary and upper secondary – the rate of academic progress is not uniform. Two phenomena stand out:

- staying down (grade repetition) by weak pupils,
- dropping out by those who feel unfit to pursue their studies.

Nevertheless, between 1963 and 1976, staying down and dropping out in the compulsory sector diminished markedly. During the same period, selection criteria for admittance to the upper secondary cycle, especially for prolonged courses of study, remained extremely severe. Over the same thirteen years, the gap between the two major geographical zones did not vary: attendance in southern schools continued to be more incomplete and irregular.

Up until 1976, then, there was a general slowing of the selection process, but the trend thereafter was reversed. A study of grade repetition statistics shows that a lower rate of staying down in primary schools has gone hand-in-hand with a rise in the rate at both types of secondary schools, especially among first-year classes. Dropping out has all but disappeared at the primary level, but in the lower secondary cycle, although slightly on the decrease, it continues to occur. Here again, the greatest percentage of drop-outs is among the first-year pupils. This points up a peculiar feature of the selection mechanism in the Italian school system. In contrast with other countries, where final examinations at the end of each cycle act as an instrument of selection, selection in Italy occurs for the most part at the beginning of the lower and upper secondary school cycles, whereas the pass-rate for final examinations is very high. A geographical analysis of the data makes it clear that, after 1976, particularly at primary school level, backwardness due to staying down or dropping out is greater in the South than in the rest of the country.

Higher attendance rates have had a strong impact on the social composition of the student population. With the broadening of the social base of those having access to education, large numbers of young people from less privileged reaches of society are now entering the upper secondary cycle and the university. However, real equality of opportunity remains a far off prospect. The many obstacles still to be overcome include economic and cultural factors outside the system and, within it, the behaviour and training background of teaching staff.

In terms of access to education, the rise in attendance has improved sex equality. At the middle and upper levels, differences still existed in 1965 which put females at a disadvantage. The problem did not arise in the early phases of schooling; at nursery and primary school, girls and boys were almost evenly divided. At that time, the percentages of female pupils were respectively 44.9 in middle schools and 34.2 in universities. Twelve years later, in 1977, the social conditioning restricting the education of women seemed to have entirely disappeared at both secondary levels. The proportion of female pupils then averaged close to 50 per cent. Even so, in upper secondary schools, because of attitudes bound up with socio-cultural stereotypes, girls tended to choose a different syllabus from that followed by male pupils. Moreover, girls had a lower rate of transition from one cycle to another. Higher female attendance is also reflected at university level since enrolments of women students now make up 40.9 per cent of the total.

Another feature of the education system's evolution over the last ten years is the development of technical and vocational education. In 1970, institutions providing this type of education represented 41 per cent of the total system, rising to 44.6 per cent in 1980. Two changes have certainly contributed to this development, which has occurred fairly uniformly in all regions. First, the passage of two laws in 1960 granted freer access to university to holders of technical diplomas; previously, these students had been excluded from most degree courses. Second, a new type of leaving certificate was introduced, the certificate of technical proficiency, giving unrestricted access to the university. There is a general tendency for industrial technical institutes to over-specialise and for commercial training institutes to under-specialise. Parliament is currently examining reforms aimed at remedying this situation. The problems of administrative overlap between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour in the field of job training, raised in the previous report *Reviews of National Policies for Education – Italy* (1969), have been solved by legislation to transfer authority to the regions.

The number of pupils receiving education in private institutions is comparatively small. One explanation for this is pecuniary; school fees must be paid. Except for nursery schools, private establishments do not receive state aid. Ethical considerations are also involved, due to

the usually religious nature of these establishments and the often mediocre quality of the education provided. From 1975 on, the proportion of pupils in private schools has diminished regularly. At primary level, the percentage dropped from 7.6 to 6.9, at middle level from 7 to 4, and at upper secondary level from 14.3 to 9.9. However, in recent years, the curve has dipped sharply.

Apart from the technical sector where private enterprise competes for manpower, Italy, unlike many other industrialised countries, has had no serious difficulty in recruiting teachers. Between 1964 and 1970, teacher recruitment increased in proportion with the number of pupils, so that the pupil/teacher ratio remained practically unchanged. This generalisation does not, of course, exclude variations within the different cycles. School attendance having risen by over 4 million over the last fifteen years, it was necessary to recruit 450 000 teachers over the same period. The upsurge in recruitment brought in its wake a number of problems relating to the selection of teachers for permanent posts. After 1970, new legislation made it possible gradually to settle these problems. As in most industrialised countries, women in the teaching profession far outnumber men. In the last few years, however, the percentage of women in education has dropped noticeably.

Along with action taken to match human resources to the educational needs of society, considerable efforts have also been made in the field of material resources. Outside the primary school sector, more than half of the present stock of buildings and equipment was built or adapted after 1965. Despite this quantitative improvement some deficiencies remain but the period of stabilisation in the 1980s, due to a marked drop in the birth rate, should enable them to be remedied. By 1985/86, a falling off of over one million pupils is expected. Up until 1985/86, this decrease will mainly concern primary schools; in the five years following, both primary and middle schools will be affected.

The considerable drop in the number of enrolments will inevitably modify personnel and material requirements, making for redundancy in the near future. For this reason, it is important, at a time when problems of overstaffing and over-equipment are about to challenge the education system, that thought be given to the best ways of putting resources to use. Some measures can be envisaged immediately:

- extension of school hours, especially for the period of compulsory schooling;
- also at the compulsory level, an increase in remedial tuition for backward pupils and in supportive action;
- better use of teachers' aptitudes, with the creation of specialised fields, such as librarianship, vocational guidance, curriculum planning and so on;
- horizontal mobility, allowing teachers to move into other sectors of the civil service;
- development of other forms of instruction, in adult education, for example.

**Teacher training, recruitment, and refresher training**

The need for all teachers, including nursery and primary-school teachers, to have undergone training not only at secondary but also at the post-secondary level (as was underscored in the previous report) was recognised in the 1973 and 1974 laws concerning the legal status of teachers, which went so far as to require "a complete university training" for all. However, pending the sweeping reforms under way, these provisions have been left in abeyance.

Similarly, no solution has yet been found to the problem of adapting teacher training at both secondary levels to the type of teaching implied in the various qualifying examinations;

this applies both to course content and teacher familiarisation with educational psychology and method.

Refresher training of teachers has been provided in fairly traditional forms, sometimes with a high degree of decentralisation in accordance with the 1974 legislation, in individual establishments, or in IRRSAE. However, the cumbersome procedures for seconding staff from the Ministry of Education have fettered the activity of these institutes. Attention may nevertheless be drawn to a number of recent ventures, in particular that of the Italian Society of Physics which has launched the "Relativity project". The aim is to improve pupils' knowledge of physics, without sacrificing the traditional syllabi, by general reorganisation and adaptation of teaching methods and the setting up of special units to deal with the new subject. There are also interesting projects, set up by associations of secondary and university teachers, to bring up to date the teaching of mathematics and science. One of the more important of the recent reforms has been the partial reorganisation of lower secondary education which has made possible the strengthening of science education and the extension of "technical education", which has now become compulsory, to the whole three-year cycle. Lastly, on the subject of keeping abreast with new knowledge, there is the Ministry of Education's activity on behalf of teachers in the technical sector, and the scheme financed by the European Community devised in conjunction with the Ministry by the Institute for Apprenticeship and Job Training (ISFOL).

**Expenditure on education**

In accordance with the 1966/70 five-year plan for school development, expenditure for education over the period grew by 61.5 per cent, and the Ministry of Education's budget by 47.5 per cent. Since 1970, state spending on education, as a percentage of total expenditure, has decreased, from 19 per cent in 1971 to 9.3 per cent in 1980.

Education-related expenditure is shared between a large number of interested parties: the State, i.e., the ministries; and local authorities, i.e., the regions, provinces and communes. The greatest share goes to the Ministry of Education, which in 1980 accounted for 87.5 per cent of overall public expenditure on education. The allocation of appropriations in this way gives rise to certain problems. The granting to schools in 1974 of power of decision over educational and administrative spending, brought into sharp relief the serious shortcomings of a funding system operating haphazardly for lack of adequate planning. The central education administration lacks the precise yardsticks necessary in order to define rules applicable to financial measures. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Education has very recently accepted the principle of setting up a body for controlling, analysing and programming the Ministry's budget, monitoring educational spending, and defining financial flows and appropriate standards of reference.

From 1974 to 1978, the Ministry of Education's expenditures for personnel – administrative, teaching and non-teaching, but omitting university – rose by 86.8 per cent, while the number of personnel increased by approximately 9.9 per cent and cost per head rose by 59.2 per cent. This means that over this period the increase in personnel accounted for about 32 per cent of the rise in expenditure. In real terms, the Ministry's total expenditures rose by about 51 per cent as compared to 1971. Average spending per pupil has risen significantly over the last ten years. A child in nursery school costs 36 per cent more than in 1971. In primary school, he costs three times as much, and at secondary and university level, the average cost per pupil or student has doubled.

Apart from the Ministry of Education, eight other central administrations are

responsible for education-related expenditure: the Ministry of Construction (school buildings), the Ministry of Labour (which remains responsible for certain aspects of vocational guidance), the Ministry of Health (although its share has become insignificant since training of medical and ancillary personnel was entrusted to the Regions), the Treasury, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry for Tourism and Entertainment. Since being set up in 1975, the Ministry for Cultural Assets and the Environment holds responsibility for the artistic and archaeological heritage, for scientific and cultural academies, and the public records. In 1980, its budget amounted to 2.2 per cent of total state expenditure on education and culture.

Meanwhile, the transfer of state powers to the regions, carried out in two stages in 1972 and 1978, has brought about considerable changes in the expenditures of local authorities, the regions, provinces and communes. In succession, the Ministry of Education was divested of its responsibility for educational aid and admissions, adult education, school building, university admissions, and certain areas of vocational guidance (where this was related to the labour market). With all its imperfections, the transfer has given renewed vitality to the sectors involved.

# II

## TREATMENT BY THEME

### Participation

"Participation" has been more a fact of politics than a development in education. The demand for a share in decision-making sprang up in large and middle-sized cities, in factories and among users of public services. In the schools, it was connected with another facet of democratisation, namely, mass school attendance, which affected over half of all Italian families. In the compulsory phase of schooling, the level of parent participation is about 50 per cent, but at upper secondary level, where parents play a less definable role, the percentage is much lower. Generally speaking, the rate of student participation is highest.

Certain achievements due to participation are universally recognised. Among the most significant: publication in full of budget management choices, even in establishments with small budgets; collegial decision-making on out-of-class activities, such as excursions, museum visits, etc.; laying down of criteria which are as objective as possible, notably from the social aspects, for the grouping of pupils; extension of opening hours for school premises to permit after-school activities. Results in the area of teaching proper are perhaps less convincing. Even so, given the traditional individualism of teaching staff, the very fact of having to take collegial decisions on a wide number of matters has brought about considerable progress, in both social relationships and the interaction of ideas.

### Legal status of personnel

The 1973-74 regulations have not changed the legal status of staff with respect to the tasks confided to them. Nevertheless, the role of the inspectors, formerly confined to the primary school, has recently been extended to cover secondary education. The range of inspectors' responsibilities has been broadened to other fields, in particular the preparation of study programmes and examinations. The prerogatives of principals and directors have been clearly defined so as to avoid any encroachment on the decision-making powers now exercised by school councils.

For their part, the teachers have acquired greater influence, compared with the previous situation, mainly because they are now represented at all levels in bodies which frequently have advisory powers. No significant changes have been introduced in the work programme; the teaching load remains the same (30 hours per week in nursery schools, 24 in primary schools, 16 in secondary schools). However, the renewal of the collective agreements signed by

the teachers in 1981 has enabled a better insertion in the timetable of tasks required of teachers outside classroom hours: class and academic councils, activities bearing on the promotion and organisation of innovation, or the updating and acquiring of knowledge.

Some difficulties still arise between staff and certain branches of the school administration. It would seem, though, that the reform of the Ministry of Education and its various services will clear up these problems.

**Teacher training**

The need to use non-established teaching staff has resulted in an insufficient degree of preparedness on the part of a large number of teachers. For this reason, refresher courses are taking on ever greater importance. Considerable freedom of action is left to the teaching body of each institution in organising refresher training. In the past, continuing courses have been made possible through the release of special funds tailored to the requests which schools have been invited to send in. The Ministry's study and programming service has carried out several continuing training schemes. Outside the education system, a number of organisations (local authorities, trade unions, professional and cultural associations) have engaged in refresher activities for teachers.

Among the various bodies responsible for continuing training, the IRRSAE have an important part to play, but for the time being, because of delays in their becoming operational, they act as mere adjuncts in organising or sometimes simply channelling funds to – continuing training – courses. This situation should change in the future.

**Regulations governing experiments**

Considering the ingrained uniformity of the Italian education system, it can be said that Decree nº 419, dated 31st May 1974, has given new impetus to experimentation. The law provides for innovatory action to be taken by a certain number of bodies: the Ministry, teachers' committees, departmental schools, and councils.

Because of the slow start of the IRRSAEs, it is not yet possible to judge the effectiveness of the master plan for experimentation, although it is not difficult to predict certain problems of co-ordination. Contact with the administration should prevent questions of organisation being decided without account being taken of technical and cultural evaluation, and also stop some regions acting without due regard for the choices of others. Somehow, the national approach and regional viewpoints will have to be reconciled.

Decree 419 goes beyond "structural" experiments, defined as "research and implementation of innovations relating to school organisation and the existing structures"; it deals also with new ideas in teaching theory and methods, as applied to study programmes. In the latter case procedures are simplified, since experimenting is regarded as a corollary of teaching autonomy.

**Compulsory schooling**

In the early 1970s, innovation in the Italian school system began in the form of pilot experiments. Thirteen years later, one of the problems remaining as concerns the compulsory phase of schooling is the co-ordination of experimentation and innovation proper.

For this reason, teachers and headmasters have been asked to incorporate into their normal teaching activities "forms of experimentation and control", using "systematic procedures and rigorous methodology", with a view to stimulating "critical reflection on teaching and learning experience, and experimental research into the problems of in-school education". It quickly became clear that a distinction – later embodied in law – had to be made between "methodological and pedagogical" experiments on the one hand, and "structural" experiments dealing with institutional organisation on the other. The first kind are suggested by teachers in schools and are subject to approval by the schools or teachers' committees; the second can be carried out in national programmes, or proposed by the teachers' committees and other bodies. The terms of the law insist on the necessity for considering experimentation as a major task for teachers, working as they do in an institution constantly reflecting the needs of society. The teacher's status as researcher and the school's vocation to experiment are thus recognised.

Since the 1970s, interesting new methods have been devised for assessing retention of knowledge and grading pupils. But here, too, a gap exists between local action and the ideas of the central administration. The question is how to appraise the worth of experiments, and how to administer them. To permit nationwide evaluation, experimental schemes must be submitted for prior approval to the Technical and Scientific Committee on Experimentation, whose job it is to ensure that experiments comply with certain criteria deemed essential. As a result, a new plan of action has gradually been pieced together, building on the experimental findings of the past ten years. It should nonetheless be pointed out that central policy for distributing teaching posts and allocating available funds acts as something of a brake on decentralisation; this, along with other factors, has put a definite curb on the inventive thrust coming from below.

The "full-time" experiment in primary schools, involving 300 000 pupils and 10 per cent of the teaching force, was regarded as a priority project in the compulsory phase of schooling. It offers a good example therefore of the success or resistance encountered by innovation. The regulations defining the application of the experiment were contained in a 1973 ministerial circular. Two years later, another circular required the participants to carry out preliminary assessment to determine whether the experiment ought to be continued or not. A central committee set out the results in a general report. The findings provided an excellent guide for future innovation, and a number of lessons were learned; in remote and less developed parts of the country, despite several thought-provoking exceptions, innovation did not take effect or sink in as quickly as elsewhere; branch by branch comparison (reception facilities, school lunches, etc.) between the various "full-time" experiments was difficult to establish, even though some conclusions applicable to ordinary schooling could be drawn from them; there was evident need to rethink basic and continuing teacher training and readapt its methods, means and duration to the evolving situation in schools.

As for "supplementary activities" in lower secondary education, institutional logic apparently persists in relegating them to hours set apart from normal school work, preferably in the afternoon, and this obviously does not make them any easier to organise. The Ministry of Education, however, as early as 1971, issued a set of instructions aimed at upgrading the status of these activities, beginning with remedial classes, and then extending to the whole school. All these experiments point out, once again, the crucial importance of programming; it must make provision for fuller treatment of the subjects taught and for the experiments taking place, from primary level on, in the programme field; it must also be geared to the growing complexity of school organisation, a natural consequence of team teaching, variable class groupings and collegial decision-making.

In an entirely different area, the last ten years have witnessed striking new approaches to

the incorporation of handicapped pupils into nursery, primary and middle schools. In the past, handicapped children pursued their education in specialised institutions, completely separate from ordinary schools. Laws passed in 1962 empowered the setting up in the compulsory phase of special annexes and complementary classes. These classes got off to a difficult start, unlike the special education classes which burgeoned rapidly; in theory open only to "educationally maladjusted" pupils, the latter in practice accepted emotionally disturbed, sensory and physically handicapped children. Another law adopted in 1968 provided for "separate education" for 3 to 6 year-olds suffering from mental and behavioural disorders, or from sensory and physical malformations. Nursery educators, however, were in no hurry to set up special annexes and did all they could instead to encourage the inclusion of handicapped infants in ordinary nursery schools. Alerted by handicapped children's parents associations, which claimed the right for their children to be enrolled in the same classes as other children, public opinion succeeded in slowing down the creation of separate classes. A new law for the non-war disabled and cripples passed by Parliament in 1971 vindicated the parents' claim, and laid down that "except for cases in which mental or physical impairment precludes or impedes either learning or incorporation in normal classes, compulsory schooling should take place in the ordinary state school establishment". A series of legislative measures adopted in 1975, 1976 and 1977 rounded out the law, which in concrete terms led to the creation of a special section within the Ministry of Education to deal with the problems of handicapped pupils; its task is to co-ordinate action inside the normal school system and to bring order into the whole of the special education branch. As of 1980 this integration policy, in line with that followed in the past few years by several EEC countries, has resulted in a third of Italian schools admitting handicapped children. Overall progress is satisfactory, but it must be acknowledged that much more remains to be done in this field. Numerous serious difficulties remain; sustained action over a long period will be necessary to overcome them.

To take an example, one of the major problems at the present time lies in redefining the qualifications which teaching staff must have to carry out the new tasks resulting from innovation in education, and especially to teach in schools open to handicapped children. Instead of preparing a few thousand specialists for work in separate institutions, it is now a question of familiarising hundreds of thousands of teachers with new and challenging situations. This explains why follow-up courses on the assimilation of handicapped pupils have been organised for inspectors, administrators and teachers. A further stimulus to this action is foreseeable once the IRRSAE are in a position to play their part. In addition, a new category of teacher for primary and middle schools, the "support teacher", was introduced in 1977. These teachers are assigned to classes of no more than 20 or 25 pupils which include handicapped children. Eventually, the new possibility for schools to recruit "supplementary staff" should lead to a more rational employment of support teachers.

Another problem for schools admitting handicapped children arises from the lack of adequate health, rehabilitation and aid services on which to rely when the need arises. The absence of such services could jeopardise the action undertaken by schools on behalf of pupils with learning and adjustment difficulties. Faulty co-ordination between state schools and local authorities responsible for certain services severely hampers the assimilation of handicapped pupils; over and above action by the school, other types of action are required which cannot be assumed by educational establishments. Consequently, new bodies must be set up to act at the requisite levels of authority and responsibility.

A sweeping reform in lower secondary schooling took place in the 1960s. In 1962, Parliament passed a law integrating lower secondary with vocational (no Latin) schooling. Then in 1977 a new law abolished all distinctions between syllabi by eliminating Latin and making manual training and music compulsory over the full three years. Based on these two

pieces of legislation, new syllabi were drawn up in 1979, in accordance with the following principles:

- programmed schooling
- personalised teaching
- interdisciplinary approach
- regular testing of knowledge retention
- continuing contact with the social environment
- personal and especially group research as the favoured classroom technique.

In so far as programming is concerned, the idea is to avoid the over-strict weekly timetable for each class and each subject and so make it possible to organise groups of pupils for remedial and enrichment programmes; 160 hours spread over specific periods of the year are to be set aside for such teaching. Obviously, it is not enough merely to include the 160 hours in the timetable; they have to be integrated harmoniously into a balanced programme of schooling; it is necessary then to think in terms of *curriculum*. The notion of curriculum, introduced into Italian legislation by the 1977 law, corresponds to the need to focus both on individual study paths and on the concrete aspect of experience which has educational value and which is therefore useful from the point of view of "socialisation". In theory moreover, if not always in practice, a properly conceived programme should work at several levels: the classroom, the school, the neighbourhood and also the district – for outings, guided visits and educational tours.

Individualised instruction has become a central plank of the new programmes; grading, for instance, is being replaced by informal assessments based on regular observation of the pupil's attainment. Generally speaking, these programmes do their utmost to accomplish the basic goal of compulsory education, namely, aiding each pupil to develop intellectually, emotionally and socially to the best of his or her ability. With this in mind, more and more stress is being laid on the requirement of "interdisciplinarity"; the encompassing of several disciplines makes the teaching programme at once more complex and more indispensable. This approach is doubly justified, since the new syllabi set considerable store by the study of relations with the environment, which is by definition the focus of geographical, demographical, historical, scientific and other forms of interaction.

While important, this development should not obscure the need for a complete reform of primary education. Such a reform should find answers to the questions raised in the report of the Commission set up in 1981 to provide "a preliminary draft of basic general guidelines for teaching programmes in primary schools". What should be the place of religious instruction, currently referred to officially as "the foundation and the crown" of education, as the Concordat puts it? Should or should not the compulsory school age be lowered from six to five, as some recommend? Is the present timetable of 24 hours per week spread over six mornings still the best adapted to the needs of an effective teaching institution called upon the fulfil both educational and cultural goals? In order to reshape the school and its programmes, should not teacher training also be completely reorganised?

Primary education is therefore on the threshold of widespread changes, and the present situation should be thought of as transitional. The immediate future raises questions of content and method; there seems to be a growing consensus for both refashioning teaching programmes and introducing structural and institutional reforms.

**Upper secondary education**

For several years now the "second cycle" of secondary education has been at the heart of the debate over the renewal of the education system. It has given rise to numerous Bills in

Parliament and to a wealth of interesting experiments. But, probably because of the complex issues involved at this level, upper secondary education has not been the object of any direct legislation over the past fourteen years. As with the other cycles, the 1970 and 1974 decrees mentioned earlier have permitted the creation of new experimental structures and new programme content and hence the definition of a certain number of options as a basis for "vocational profiles", lacking hitherto in the education context, and also in a number of EEC pilot projects dealing with the transition from school to employment.

The present character of upper secondary education stems therefore from the legal provisions of the 1969 Act concerning experiments in vocational institutes: the possibility of acceding to higher education from all types of secondary establishments, and revised procedures for secondary leaving and teacher proficiency examinations. Pending wholesale reform, these advances leave much to be deisred, to the extent that lack of co-ordination leads to overlaps between streams and clashes between different branches of training. To take one case, the five-year vocational courses, even though designed for a different purpose, sometimes duplicate the technical institutes. Furthermore, the vocational training dispensed by the regional authorities, like the legal measures granting freer access to higher education, have not always been easy to put into practice. These last have not fulfilled the promise of bringing about real change in university recruitment by admitting those formerly excluded; at best they have widened the spectrum of choice by providing a greater number of avenues to professional training. In the light of this situation, it would be well to call into question the educational effectiveness of the upper secondary cycle, and rethink a system composed of disconnected, non-communicating streams.

The debate on reform of upper secondary education is therefore not closed. As early as 1970, the international Congress held at Frascati under the auspices of the OECD's Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) and of the Italian Ministry of Education, made a contribution to thinking on the problem by proposing a ten-point plan for "a gradual restructuring" of secondary education. Up until now it has not been possible to implement various recommendations of the Congress – and, in particular, the fundamental proposal to institute a core curriculum. Five years later, in 1975, the question of reform again arose, at a second international gathering organised in Venice by the Ministry of Education, in connection with relations between school and employment. As an outcome, Parliament in 1978 passed interim legislation providing for a first year of core studies for the upper secondary level, a second year with the possibility of options, and a final year of "further studies in optional disciplines and related practical work". The Bill at present under discussion recommends an extension of compulsory schooling to a total of ten years, a reform of school-leaving examinations for the university entrance diploma, and the placing under government control of such important matters as, for example, the defining of education content (subjects, timetables and curricula) and final examinations.

As far as experiments are concerned, it is not easy to calculate their real impact on upper secondary education since 1970. It can be said, however, that structural innovations or those relating to curriculum organisation have played an ever-increasing role of this cycle, and are one of the most interesting facets of its evolution over the last fifteen years. In 1970, the Ministry authorised the launching of four pilot projects, based on a model in which internal choices could be made and leanings towards future options gradually asserted. Other authorisations followed, but a certain number of requests were turned down by the Technical and Scientific Committee on experimentation set up by the Ministry in 1971. A leap forward in experimenting occurred as a result of the terms of the 1974 Presidential decree (Decree 419), stipulating that "experimentation in all types and levels of school is the natural

expression of teachers' educational autonomy", and defining the permitted bounds for experimental activity. These new provisions explain why authorisations to undertake new projects jumped from 28 in 1975 to 426 in 1981. One salient feature of the experiments lies in the creation of a core curriculum for two-thirds of classroom hours during the first two years, with the remaining third devoted to options. Other projects defer optional subjects until the second year, or devote two years to a core curriculum. As a general rule in the projects under way, core subjects take up about 60 per cent of class time during the first year, falling to 30 per cent in the third year. Comparison with a control group has shown that experimental schools obtain average or better-than-average results in all disciplines, with the exception of civics and modern languages. Once again, there is a disparity between North and South: experiments are not only less frequent in the South, but they are also less effective.

One of the major concerns of all who ponder over the secondary education system turns on the connection between it and the employment situation. Perhaps to a greater extent than in other countries of the European Community, a gap exists in Italy between official training structures and the labour scene, such that the education authorities are obliged to seek new answers to the questions of vocational training. The fact that holders of diplomas from the technical institutes can now continue their studies at university has swollen attendance figures, while distorting the university's mission to provide career training and creating an imbalance with respect to the employment market. Thirty seven per cent of 20 year-olds hold an upper secondary diploma, whereas the percentage of diploma holders among the working population is 20.5, including 5 per cent with university diplomas (1980 figures). Youth unemployment figures confirm this pattern: 40 per cent of first-time job seekers between the ages of 14 and 29 hold either a university diploma or a school-leaving certificate. It would seem that in recent years the education system has developed more in response to the social appetite for education than with regard for the numerical and qualitative needs of the labour market. In this respect, given the changing social and economic tendencies in education, the proposed new model should bring significant improvements in career preparation. To be more precise, the reforms being studied in the light of future trends propose limiting specialised vocational training, especially in the first two years of the cycle, and favouring instead prolonged schooling for the entire school population. To this end, the complete secondary cycle, hitherto designed to educate medium-level salaried staff and prepare pupils for university entrance, would become a school for all, including future office and manual workers. The most interesting innovation, no doubt, would be the introduction of a three-year cycle offering a general cultural and vocational education, with very few scientific or career oriented specialities. It is true that reality calls for a strengthening of scientific knowledge and the acquiring of basic technology for the principal areas of economic activity. However, in order not to widen the gap between schooling and employment possibilities, the coupling of basic science education with preparation for careers will be modulated according to the direction chosen. It will also be possible to set up specific lines of study in the light of particular local needs or the production characteristics of individual geographical regions. So as not to worsen existing imbalances, or exacerbate discrimination between young people from the long school cycle and those who have dropped out of school without sufficient career training, it will also be necessary to implement a policy of new and better possibilities for out-of-school career training. This could be done either within the framework of the "work/training" contract contained in a Bill currently being drawn up by Parliament, or by establishing links between state schools and regional vocational training activities.

To sum up, the proposed model of the reform – whose concern is with all youth and not only schoolgoers – is based on three elements:

- basic technical, scientific and cultural education;
- on-the-job vocational training;
- specialised training to fit particular cases.

No single formula should govern the mix of the three; rather they should be combined in a variety of ways.

**The university**

Despite the surge in enrolments, which in twenty years rose from 200 000 to 600 000 and despite the evident and long-standing need for transformation in response to social change, the organisation of Italian universities had not undergone any major alteration before the late 1960s. This is not to say that the framework of teaching has remained unchanged: innovations in courses have been made possible by amendments to the statutes of universities which possess separate legal identities and enjoy a degree of educational independence. Even if these steps brought about improvements in course content, they did nothing to alter the organisational structures which govern the university and can only be modified by Parliament. The rise in demand brought in its wake a number of quantitative problems: a wider range of courses; the creation of new universities; increasing ties with secondary education and the employment market. The need to rethink the university system is both obvious and urgent. As a result of pressure from the student movement of 1967/1968, an Act passed in 1969 did bring about some significant structural changes, such as the opening up of access to the university and the granting to students of the right to suggest to their faculties study programmes different from those laid down by ministerial order.

"Urgent measures for the university", as defined by a law passed in 1973 and revised in 1980, affect the staff, and especially the teaching staff, still split into two categories – tenured and associate staff. These measures have brought changes not only in the status of university personnel, but also in planning and in the composition of university governing bodies, hitherto restricted to tenured teaching staff. In addition, a presidential Decree of 1977 made the Region responsible for all the tasks in each university *(Opera Universitaria)* in connection with the implementation of the right to study. In 1979, a law set up the National University Council, whose members are elected. These precedents inspired the 1980 law which empowers the government "to reform university education and related training, and to carry out experiments in teaching and organisation". Since the law provides that, four years after implementation, "the government shall evaluate the results of the experiments, prior to submitting a Bill for the comprehensive reform of university teaching and organisation", a transitional phase is seemingly about to begin.

The new regulations specify the limits of the "experimental" approach and lay stress on the university's role as "the prime site of scientific research". They also define a system of financing the university's operations, and conditions with regard to doctoral studies and degrees. Special academic commissions have been created for each university, whose function it is to co-ordinate and check on the progress of experimental projects. Real power has been devolved to faculties and departments, even though it is limited to the research activities and promotion of academic staff. The innovation may possibly also cover inter-faculty and inter-departmental groupings responsible for either research projects or the management of complex scientific services.

Possibilities for experiment in teaching, especially in non-traditional subjects, are more limited. Still, thanks to what experimentation there is, it is fairly certain that the general organisation of tuition will be readapted in coming years. This seems all the more sure since

a 1982 statutory order in application of the Devolution Act of 1980 has made possible the reorganisation of higher specialised and post-graduate institutes and single study schools which had previously lain outside the purview of official university action. The same 1982 order contains directives concerning the siting of universities, and allows the bringing under state control of a number of locally initiated free universities, for whose operating expenses central state financing has long been sought. The law also repeals the 1973 ban on creating new faculties in existing universities, while reasserting Parliamentary control over the setting up of new university centres.

Even though thorough reform of the university system is not yet foreseeable, the measures taken over the last decade have brought about considerable improvements. Nevertheless, the need is felt today to adopt further measures in the following sectors:

- reshaping courses to take account of the main features of the coming reform of the upper secondary cycle; defining the cross-overs by which students can have access to various different courses of study, facilitating progress from the bachelor's to the master's degree, organising courses for part-time students, etc.;
- defining the legal framework for organisation of support measures;
- rationalising the siting of universities throughout the regions.

Finally, the issues raised by the reform of the faculties of medicine – recently under examination by Parliament – should be weighed with special care.

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